# Changing Childhoods, Places and Work: the everyday politics of learning-by-doing in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia

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# Changing Childhoods, Places and Work: the everyday politics of learning-by-doing in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia

## Veranderende kindertijd, plaatsen en werk: de alledaagse politiek van al doende leren in de stedelijke weefsector in Ethiopië

## Thesis

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**Erasmus University Rotterdam**
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**and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board**

The public defence shall be held on
**Wednesday 20 February 2019 at 10:00 hrs.**

by

Fasil Nigussie Taye
**Born in Ethiopia**

International Institute of Social Studies

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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*Dedication*

*ለውድ ባለቤቴ አሙዬ እንዲሁም ልጆቻችን አቤሌ እና የአብ፥*

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# Acronyms

**CODESRIA**: Council of Development of Social Science Research in Africa
**CSA**: Central Statistical Agency
**E-FACE**: Ethiopians-Fighting Against Child Exploitation
**FDRE**: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
**GDP**: Gross Domestic Product
**GTP**: Growth and Transformation Plan
**IDS**: Industrial Development Strategy
**ILO**: International Labour Organisation
**IPEC**: International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour
**KII**: Key Informant Interviews
**MCDP**: Mission for Community Development Organization
**MDGs**: Millennium Development Goals
**MKOs**: More Knowledgeable Others
**MoE**: Ministry of Education
**MoLSA**: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
**MSEs**: Micro and Small Enterprises
**NGOs**: Non- Governmental Organizations
**TVET**: Technical and Vocational Education and Training
**UN:** United Nations
**UNCRC**: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
**UNDP**: United Nations Development Programme
**UNESCO**: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
**UNFPA**: United Nations Population Fund
**UNICEF**: United Nations Children's Fund
**USAID**: United States Agency for International Development
**USDoL**: United States Department of Labour

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# Abstract

The academic literature on children's work is increasingly moving towards a position in which children's involvement in paid work is appreciated as both potentially harmful and emancipatory (see for e.g., Bourdillon et al 2010, Aufseeser et al 2018). Such a nuanced position, however, stands in stark contrast with the policy reality in Ethiopia and to a lesser extent globally. In this thesis, I zoom in on the case of working children in the urban weaving economy drawing from 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork and school survey in Addis Ababa. The working children were from the Gamo ethnic group who are originally from south-western Ethiopia. Although Gamo children's involvement in weaving is widespread, little is known about the nature of their work. Yet state and non-state actors labelled child weaving as a hazardous occupation with children's presence in the sector mostly associated with human trafficking and poor educational performance. Without denying the hardships some young weavers may experience and the degrees of exploitation they may be subject to, the objective of this thesis is to problematize the policy practice of eliminating children's work from the sector and to complicate discussions on children's weaving work. I do so by broadening our understanding of children's involvement in weaving work, highlighting it as form of 'learning-by-doing'. As such, I recognize working children as active agents insofar as they engage in the co-production of value with adults whilst cultivating weaving skills.

This thesis puts forth an analytical framework referred to as *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing* which integrates local and global approaches to childhood. In so doing, the thesis aims to capture the intergenerational and gendered dynamics of work in particular geographies and to demonstrate changing childhoods in a development context. Such an analytical exercise brings political economy and sociocultural approaches into dialogue with

each other, bounded together with the relational concept of 'place'. Children and other actors imbue young peoples' everyday places such as schools and workplaces with meaning, while these places are also targeted by larger development processes. By underscoring the physicality of places (Gieryn 2000, Low 2009), this study gives analytical focus to four spatial contexts (i.e., schools, home-based workplaces, new workplaces (factories), and villages) to understand how global and local processes serve as interacting factors in (re)shaping childhoods and children's work.

As demonstrated in the thesis, children's involvement in weaving is more of a sociological and cultural phenomenon than a social problem. Children's work is, in fact, understood as foundational for the reproduction of labour-power and the development of competency. In this regard, the lived experiences of several generations of Gamo weavers prove how engagement in weaving at a particular life-phase of childhood (early adolescence) is relevant to cultivating superior weaving skills. The process of becoming a weaver is, however, gendered, with widespread attitudes that differently view the involvement of male and female bodies in weaving. Girls' bodies are believed locally to be physically vulnerable and unsuitable for weaving. This has led to the reproduction of a gendered division of labour, and thereby inequality in the way surplus value is shared among the different producers in the weaving economy.

This thesis also explains how broader development processes (i.e., universalization of schooling, anti-child labour programmes, and a neoliberal agenda of enterprise development) operate against the mundane social reproductive roles of Gamo children, (re)shaping their everyday lives and the role of weaving therein. Apart from analysing the changing dynamics of children's productive roles, the dissertation also attends to working children's consumption cultures in their localities. It highlights how involvement in weaving activities has enabled Gamo children to become independent consumers whose consumption practices are shaped by the processes of globalization. Nonetheless, like their productive activities, working children's consumption cultures are also gendered, reinforcing

particular forms of masculine and feminine identities, and thereby shaping peer relations.

As a whole, this thesis demonstrates that while excess involvement in weaving work at a young age can be detrimental, early involvement in this work is equally essential to acquire the skills necessary to become a master weaver. Importantly, in the increasingly uncertain economy of contemporary Ethiopia, possessing weaving skills in addition to educational qualifications gives children a broader base for their future livelihood. The thesis ultimately argues that the proposed elimination of children's involvement in weaving work will effectively eliminate children from the production of hand-woven textile. Especially, as alternative Technical and Vocational Education Trainings (TVET) are offered on a highly irregular basis and unsuccessful (producing less competent weavers); the Ethiopian weaving economy's future survival is threatened by the strong abolitionist sentiments towards child labour.

*Veranderende kindertijd, plaatsen en werk: de alledaagse politiek van al doende leren in de stedelijke weefsector in Ethiopië*

# Samenvatting

In de wetenschappelijke literatuur over kinderen en werk wordt de betrokkenheid van kinderen bij betaald werk steeds meer als zowel potentieel schadelijk als emancipatoir opgevat (zie bijvoorbeeld Bourdillon et al. 2010, Aufseeser et al. 2018). Dit genuanceerde standpunt staat echter in schril contrast met de beleidsrealiteit in Ethiopië en in mindere mate met de situatie wereldwijd. Dit proefschrift belicht de casus van werkende kinderen in de stedelijke weefindustrie op basis van 12 maanden etnografisch veldwerk en onderzoek op scholen in Addis Ababa. De werkende kinderen behoorden tot de etnische groep Gamo's die oorspronkelijk uit het zuidwesten van Ethiopië komen. Hoewel veel Gamo-kinderen werkzaam zijn in de weefsector, is er weinig bekend over de aard van hun werk. Toch beschouwen overheids- en niet-overheidsactoren weven als een gevaarlijke bezigheid voor kinderen en wordt de aanwezigheid van kinderen in de sector vooral in verband gebracht met mensenhandel en slechte onderwijsprestaties. Hoewel we niet de ogen mogen sluiten voor het feit dat sommige jonge wevers te maken kunnen krijgen met ontberingen en uitbuiting, is het doel van dit proefschrift om de beleidspraktijk van het uit de sector bannen van werk door kinderen te problematiseren en de discussie over weefarbeid door kinderen genuanceerder te maken. Hiertoe plaats ik de betrokkenheid van kinderen bij het weven in breder perspectief, en vat ik het op als een vorm van 'al doende leren'. Ik beschouw werkende kinderen als actieve actoren die zich samen met volwassenen bezighouden met de coproductie van waarde en zich tegelijkertijd weefvaardigheden eigen maken.

Het analytisch kader in dit proefschrift is getiteld *de alledaagse politiek van al doende leren* en hierin worden lokale en mondiale benaderingen van de kindertijd geïntegreerd. Het doel van deze benadering is om de intergenerationele en genderdynamiek van het werk in bepaalde geografische gebieden in kaart te brengen en de veranderende kindertijd in een ontwikkelingscontext aan te tonen. Hierdoor ontstaat een dialoog tussen politieke economie en sociaal-culturele benaderingen, waarbij het relationele concept van 'plaats' de verbindende schakel vormt. Kinderen en andere actoren geven betekenis aan de alledaagse plaatsen van jongeren, zoals scholen en werkplekken, terwijl deze plaatsen ook beïnvloed worden door grotere ontwikkelingsprocessen. Door de fysieke aard van plaatsen te benadrukken (Gieryn 2000, Low 2009), worden in dit onderzoek vier ruimtelijke contexten (d.w.z. scholen, thuiswerkplekken, nieuwe werkplekken (fabrieken) en dorpen) in analytisch perspectief geplaatst. Zo ontstaat inzicht in de rol van mondiale en lokale processen als interacterende factoren bij het (opnieuw) vormgeven van de kindertijd en het werk van kinderen.

Uit dit proefschrift blijkt dat de betrokkenheid van kinderen bij het weven meer een sociologisch en cultureel fenomeen dan een sociaal probleem is. Het werk van kinderen wordt feitelijk opgevat als basis voor de reproductie van arbeidskracht en de ontwikkeling van competenties. In dit verband bewijzen de ervaringen van verschillende generaties Gamo-wevers dat betrokkenheid bij het weven in een bepaalde fase van de kindertijd (vroege adolescentie) belangrijk is om superieure weefvaardigheden te ontwikkelen. Wever worden is echter een genderspecifiek proces, en er wordt zeer verschillend aangekeken tegen de betrokkenheid van mannen en vrouwen bij het weven. Meisjes worden plaatselijk als fysiek kwetsbaar beschouwd en als ongeschikt om te weven. Dit heeft geleid tot de reproductie van een seksegebonden arbeidsverdeling, en daarmee tot ongelijkheid in de manier waarop meerwaarde wordt gedeeld tussen de verschillende producenten in de weefsector.

In dit proefschrift wordt ook uitgelegd hoe bredere ontwikkelingsprocessen (d.w.z. universeel aanbieden van onderwijs, anti-kinderarbeidsprogramma's en een neoliberale agenda voor de ontwikkeling van ondernemingen) de alledaagse sociale reproductieve rol van Gamo-

kinderen tegenwerken en hun dagelijks leven en de rol van het weven daarin (opnieuw) vormgeven. Het proefschrift behandelt niet alleen de veranderende dynamiek van de productieve rol van kinderen, maar ook het consumptiepatroon van werkende kinderen in hun omgeving. Daarbij wordt benadrukt dat Gamo-kinderen dankzij hun betrokkenheid bij weefactiviteiten onafhankelijke consumenten zijn geworden en dat hun consumptiegewoonten worden bepaald door globaliseringsprocessen. Toch zijn de consumptiepatronen van werkende kinderen ook genderspecifiek, net als hun productieve activiteiten. Dit versterkt bepaalde vormen van mannelijke en vrouwelijke identiteiten, en is daarmee bepalend voor de relaties tussen leeftijdgenoten.

Over het geheel genomen laat dit proefschrift zien dat overmatige deelname aan weefarbeid op jonge leeftijd weliswaar schadelijk kan zijn, maar dat vroegtijdige betrokkenheid bij dit werk tegelijkertijd essentieel is om de benodigde vaardigheden te verwerven om een meesterwever te worden. In de steeds onzekerder wordende economie van het hedendaagse Ethiopië geeft het bezitten van weefvaardigheden kinderen naast onderwijsdiploma's een bredere basis voor hun toekomstige levensonderhoud. In dit proefschrift wordt betoogd dat het voorstel om kinderen volledig uit te sluiten van weefwerk in de praktijk betekent dat kinderen niet meer kunnen deelnemen aan de productie van handgeweven textiel. Vooral omdat alternatieve technische en beroepsopleidingen (TVET) op zeer onregelmatige basis worden aangeboden en niet succesvol zijn (ze leveren minder bekwame wevers op), wordt het voortbestaan van de Ethiopische weefeconomie bedreigd door de sterke abolitionistische sentimenten jegens kinderarbeid.

# 1 Setting the scene: re-examining children's work

## 1.1 Introduction

A series of academic and non-academic engagements have inspired me to do this research on and with children. The first engagement was a non-academic encounter in the summer 2007. With a team of experts, I participated in the evaluation of a development project implemented by an international NGO in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The project aimed to reduce the problem of child labour in the urban weaving economy, and improve the school attendance and academic achievement of child weavers. Our evaluation focused mainly on identifying the material benefits those working children gained, and mapping out the problems that required additional programme intervention in the future. With this intent, we conducted interviews, field observations and mapping exercises with adults of different gender, age groups, and affiliations including community members, local government officials, and school teachers - whom we considered as our key informants. Not a single child was invited to share a view on that project for reasons unknown to me. Yet, the bottom-line was that we gave virtually no importance and value to children's views.

Five years after in 2012, I was introduced to the idea of 'children as social actors' as part of my academic studies in children and youth studies in the Netherlands. This idea took me back to 2007 -to reflect on that anti-child labour project evaluation. Consequently, I was interested to go back to that same field site and conduct research, but this time, in a different way – taking children's views more seriously and recognizing them as social actors.

Overlooking children's voices has been common in Ethiopia and elsewhere. Jones et al (2005) observed that adults usually serve as the

principal sources of data on Ethiopian children's lives. Similarly, Robson (2004b: 194) signalled how the views of working children in sub-Saharan Africa are always less valued and under-researched in development processes. Yet children are among the most affected groups of development.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the processes of neoliberal capitalism and economic restructuring have affected children's everyday lives in several ways, but mainly by adding more workloads and responsibilities (Grusky 2001, Robson 2004b, Katz 2004, Abebe 2007, 2017). Particularly, privatization and reduced public expenditures have contributed to price hikes in basic services and utilities such as electricity and water. For instance, in Ghana, privatization led to increased water prices (up to 95%) making water less accessible to poor households (Grusky 2001). Women and girls, in particular, were greatly affected by this as they often had to travel a long distance to fetch water. In Zimbabwe, cuts in public expenditure as part of a structural adjustment programme in the 1990s, led to reduced access to basic healthcare services thereby contributing to increased health risks, high HIV/AIDS infection rates, and associated morbidity (Robson 2004b). This, in turn, escalated children's responsibilities as many of them became breadwinners in their households. In Sudan, the large-scale expansion of an agricultural project in Howa contributed to the loss of green spaces, making water and fuel distant from the village (Katz 2004). A search for fuel and water thus created more burdens on children. And in Ethiopia, the government's economic restructuring to increase foreign currency earnings through increased production and sales of coffee on the international market dragged many children into agricultural work (Abebe 2017). These cases from across different parts of sub-Saharan Africa illustrate how structural processes of neoliberal capitalism disrupt children's productive and reproductive roles. Yet little is known about how broader processes of development interact with local sociocultural contexts, and how children responded to changes in their everyday lives (Ansell 2009: 193). The localized practices of children in Ethiopia demonstrate that they

employ different strategies in reaction to the impacts of broader development processes (see chapter 7).

This study builds on the growing literature that seeks to analyse how broader political-economic processes and local sociocultural meanings attached to childhood and work serve as interacting factors to shape children's work. In so doing, I develop an analytical framework which I refer to as '*the everyday politics of learning-by-doing*'. In using this framework, the 'everyday politics' refers to development processes and institutional interests of concerned state and non-state actors who execute particular laws, policies and programmes, to (re)shape child-adult relations. For instance, government organizations and international NGOs aim to implement ILOs' Minimum Age Convention no. 138 and thereby prevent children from labour exploitation mainly imposed by adults (see chapter 4). This is understood as not only a development process; but also a political one insofar as anti-child labour programmes are mostly financed by governments and civil society organizations from western countries as part of bilateral cooperation with developing countries and project agreements. In this regard, everyday politics embraces institutional interests, the modes of control, negotiations and frictions among different actors, including people of different ages, gender and generations. Furthermore, everyday politics denotes a methodological choice pursued in research with children in general and in this study in particular. The UNCRC Article 12 asserts that children have the capability to form their own views, and have a right to be consulted on matters pertaining to their lives (UNCRC 1989). This research is conducted with an awareness of such an underlying principle, thus doing research 'with' and 'on' children instead of only 'on' children (see chapter 3). The 'learning-by-doing' component refers to working children's mundane social reproductive roles and practices. These practices are directly related to the production and reproduction of value (in material and cultural forms) as well as the formation of skills.

For the purpose of providing a holistic picture of children's work and their childhoods, the analytical framework incorporates two theoretical

lenses -sociocultural and political economy. On the one hand, through a sociocultural analysis, the meanings attached to childhood and work and the cultural factors and relational fabrics (generational and gendered) that shape childhoods are highlighted (Liebel 2004: 209). The political economy analysis, on the other hand, addresses broader issues at play. These include the neoliberal policy of promoting the private sector, universalization of schooling and the global and national movements towards eliminating child labour; which have their own role in restructuring the everyday material and social lives of working children and childhoods.

Furthermore, the concept of place is used as a lens with which to see the interactions of local and broader processes in children's everyday places such as schools and households. Children and other actors imbue these places with meaning, while these places are also targeted for larger development interventions.

This analytical exercise offers a nuanced picture on children's work, demonstrating that although excess involvement in weaving work at a young age can be detrimental, early involvement in this work is equally essential to cultivate the skills necessary to become a master weaver. Furthermore, such analysis makes this thesis insightful showing how local and global forces of change create and reinforce multiple childhood experiences for the same groups of children (in our case; Gamo children working in the weaving economy) depending on the particular localities where those children spend their everyday lives.

The issue of children's work, as explained in chapter 2, has long been contested. In recent times, however, a growing body of literature argues for a more nuanced approach instead of a judgemental one (see for e.g., Bourdillon et al 2010, Aufseeser et al 2018: 2, Bourdillon 2015). This study builds on this body of scholarly work that holds a pragmatic and open worldview instead of a judgemental view towards childhoods and children's work.

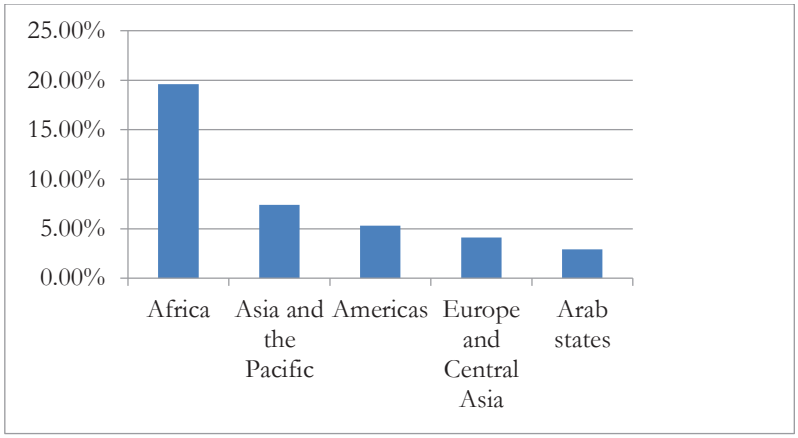
The mainstream development discourse, which I label here as 'the work-free childhood', depicts children's work as detrimental (Myers

2001, Ennew et al 2005, Abebe & Bessell 2011, Bourdillon 2015). This discourse is drawn from the ideals of 'modern childhood model' in the western culture (Myers 2001: 53). Yet, although the ideals of 'work-free childhood' are associated with western industrialized countries, in many of those countries, childhood (if defined based on chronological age to refer to people of 0 to 18 years-old) is seldom work-free. Several empirical studies show the involvement of children in paid work in western countries (See for e.g., ILO 2017, Lavalette 1999, Hungerland et al 2007). The ideals of work-free childhood are, however, appropriated in many social policy discourses and thereby serving as a yardstick to development and modernity (Balagopalan 2014, Nieuwenhuys 1996). In this regard, the work-free childhood is a rather inaccurate discourse even in the part of the world with which it is associated.

In many instances, the work-free childhood discourse is associated with a particular childhood image which is viewed as a period of life in which one is to be cared for by others, protected from harm, free for leisure and learning, without responsibility, and excluded from the market forces that rule the so-called adult world. Gainful work and employment have no place in this view, and much of children's work is considered as a socioeconomic problem. As such, the idea of work-free childhoods is embraced in all the global campaigns to create a universal norm in denouncing children's work (Ansell 2005: 173). Any other kind of childhood, contrary to the work-free childhood, is considered as a 'lost' or 'stolen' childhood. Furthermore, with the widespread use of the term 'child labour', studies framed by the work-free childhoods approach emphasize the relationship between child labour and different forms of childhood adversities and attend to the dangers of work (Aufseeser et al 2018: 2, Bourdillon 2015).

A recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) claimed that there is a strong correlation between child labour and levels of conflict, disaster and poverty (ILO 2017: 12-13). The report showed that half of the global child labour problem is found in sub-Saharan Africa (ibid: 28).

*Figure 1.1: Global child labour estimates*




*Source:* global child labour estimates (ILO 2017: 28)

As shown in the graph above, 19.6% of Sub-Saharan African children (aged 5 to 17) were involved in forms of work considered as detrimental to their wellbeing. The other regions have a figure far below 10% - with Asia reaching 7 %, and the rest remaining below 5%. The report claimed that in spite of increased policies and programmes, child labour has been on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa in the last four years (ibid: 25). There are variations in age groups, but on the whole more boys were found to perform child labour than girls (ibid: 42). Furthermore, the report showed that the majority of African children worked in the agricultural sector (85.1%) followed by services (11.2%) and industry (3.5%).

This recent ILO report is representative of many of the child labour studies in Sub-Saharan Africa that emphasize structural problems such as poverty and conflict in the continent, but overlook the relational and sociocultural aspects of children's work as shaped by the conceptions of childhood and work in particular localities.

## 1.2 Ethiopia: the research problem in context

In Ethiopia, academic studies on children's work are limited and geared mostly towards a small number of specific child-related problems (Abebe 2008b: 3-4). In line with the general trend sketched previously, most of

the studies on Ethiopian working children are shaped by the idea of work-free childhoods in which child protection, poverty, and different forms of adversities are greatly emphasized. The term child labour is widely used in both policy and academic arenas. However, the official translation of the English language term child labour into the Amharic language; *'yehitsanat gulebet bizbeza'* (literally, children's labour exploitation) is problematic insofar as it reinforces child labour as a form of exploitation (Pankhurst et al 2015: 80). The bulk of child labour studies are urban-focused and used qualitative methods with a focus on children at risk (ibid: 80). These studies mostly concentrate on the relationships between child labour and problems such as begging (Abebe 2008a), orphanhood and AIDS (Bhargava 2005, Abebe & Aase 2007, Abebe 2008b), and working street children (for e.g, Beyene & Berhane 1997, Nieuwenhuys 2001, Heinonen 2000, Ennew 2003, Aptekar & Heinonen 2003, Lalor 1999, Belay 2016). In contrast, many of the rural-based studies used quantitative surveys to look at the relations between child labour and schooling and examine the incompatibility of schooling and work (Cockburn & Dostie 2007, Admassie & Bedi 2008, Haile & Haile 2010). Moreover, some quantitative studies emphasise the relationships between specific problems and child labour such as mental health (Fekade & Alem 2001, Fekadu et al. 2006), exploitative work, and material poverty (Admassie 2002, Kifle 2002). With the exception of 'Young Lives' longitudinal studies that mainly focus on childhood poverty (Pankhurst et al 2015: 79), there is thus a paucity of mixed methods studies. The Young Lives is an international longitudinal study of childhood poverty in four countries (i.e., Ethiopia, Vietnam, Peru and India). In the Ethiopian case, Young Lives studies focus on providing a generalized picture of the meaning of poverty to children's lives, emphasizing children's subjective experiences along with standardized poverty measures. Specifically, the Young Lives studies look into several interesting issues including children's responses to poverty shocks (Chuta 2014), their nutritional status (Morrow et al 2017), their educational aspirations and their time-use (Tafere 2014, Boyden et al

2016), and the problems in the school system (Murray 2012, Orkin 2013, Aurino et al 2014).

Studies that show how broader processes of development affect children's work are limited (Abebe 2017: 2). Yet there have been increased policy and programme interventions against child labour (e.g. Pankhurst et al 2015: 107, Orkin 2010, Zegers 2013, US DoL 2012). These programmes are mainly implemented and supported by international and local NGOs that work on child protection. Orkin (2010) reported that abolitionist sentiments in overly restrictive forms are widespread in Ethiopia. Nonetheless, little is known about how development processes such as anti-child labour programmes (re) shape children's work and childhoods. This is evident from the annotated bibliographies by Save the Children and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa on childhood and youth studies (Poluha 2007, CODESRIA 2010), and those on Ethiopian studies (e.g., Ofcansky 2005). These bibliographies reveal the scarcity of research on the implications of broader development processes on children's work and childhoods in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Ethiopian context.

In this study, I aim to build on the relatively growing research that seeks to investigate local childhood experiences and the changing patterns of everyday material and social lives of working children in a development context. In so doing, my focus is on intergenerational and gendered dynamics of work to understand the changing patterns of children's everyday lives in particular localities. My study is thus outside of the boundaries of the notion of work-free childhoods; but as explained above, it rather takes an open view on children's work. As highlighted in chapter 2, due to its focus on the harmful aspects of work, the work-free childhoods discourse does not provide a full picture of children's work. Based on this, it is salient to combine local everyday contexts with broader political-economic processes as interacting variables in order to achieve a well-grounded understanding of children's

work, and thereby analyse the changing dynamics of childhoods (Abebe & Bessell 2011).

Nonetheless, in studying the changing dynamics of local childhoods and everyday life, it is crucial to locate the workplace and the specific economic sector for a better understanding of the nature of children's work. Children's work location can be rural or urban, within the formal economy or the informal economy, the agricultural or the manufacturing sector, and in the household or on the streets (Bourdillon et al 2010). In each individual case, the differences are influenced by sociocultural and political-economic factors that (re)shape children's participation in particular activities (Panelli 2002: 115, Abebe 2008a: 20). Besides, the characteristics of children's work intersect with other structuring issues such as gender, generation, age, and race. Hence, as I indicated at the outset of this chapter, my study focuses on the urban weaving economy to look into children's work in the light of the changes within it.

## 1.3 The urban weaving economy in Ethiopia

Weaving has long been a vital economic activity and one of the most important sources of livelihood next to the informal food and beverage sector in rural and urban Ethiopia (CSA 2003). Recorded evidence shows that traditional weaving activities have been practiced since the 13th century by the Amhara and Jewish communities in northern Ethiopia (Itagaki 2013: 30). In the 19th century, these practices spread to southern Ethiopia, mainly through merchants. Thus, for over a century and half, weaving has been an occupation for people in various Ethiopian communities who produce multiple types of fabrics including cultural clothes (such as *netela, gabi, kuta*),[1] and, more recently, modern fabrics (such as curtains, bed sheets, shirts, T-shirts, scarfs, and other home furnishings).

As part of recent developments in market expansion that led to the introduction of different types of fabrics (see figure 1.3 below), the weaving economy has even become more important in recent times. In the last few decades, many weavers have started producing fabrics that

are used for more casual purposes and for furnishing homes (see chapter 4). This has generally happened in tandem with increased involvement by modern fashion designers who combine traditional and contemporary dressing styles, contributing to an increased integration of cultural weaving and modern fashion design, which leads to a growing demand for weavers' fabrics on both local and international markets.

Weaving has continued to be a useful component of the Ethiopian cultural economy. Cultural economy, in this context, refers to the material production of cultural fabrics, the marketing and distinct production processes followed in particular places (Scott 1997: 333). Among different groups of people, dressing in cultural fabrics made into certain outfits has long been customary as a way to communicate feelings, attachment and belongingness in relation to specific ceremonial incidents such as, marriage, Epiphany, Easter and New Year. For example, many Ethiopian women (in both rural areas and urban settings), have preserved the tradition of wearing a shawl (*Netela*) up-side-down as an established etiquette and a sign of mourning during and after the funeral service of a deceased. As such, fabrics serve as symbolic representations to communicate certain feelings in particular life incidents.

*Figure 1.2: Many people wearing white fabric during Epiphany holiday*

*Source:* Author's own picture, Epiphany holiday in Addis Ababa, 2016

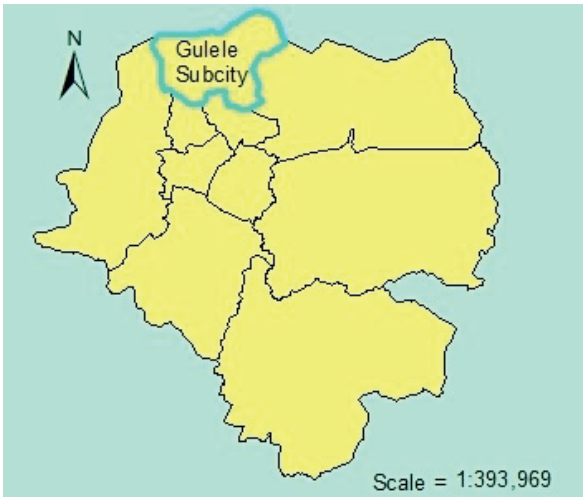
*Figure 1.3: New fabrics of weavers (scarfs) in the market*

*Source:* Author's own picture, Shiro Meda market, Addis Ababa, 2016

The workers in the urban weaving economy constitute various groups of people. However, the majority of weavers are informal, self-employed and home-based without formal training. This makes it difficult to measure the size of the weaving economy and its overall contribution to the national economy (Ali & Peerlings 2011). However, one report showed that in 2002 there were an estimated 211,842 handloom/weaving textile enterprises in different parts of the country (CSA 2003). In Addis Ababa, an estimated 20,000 weaving enterprises

were found, of which more than 60% of the weavers were concentrated in Gulele sub-city (Alemayehu 2006: 7).

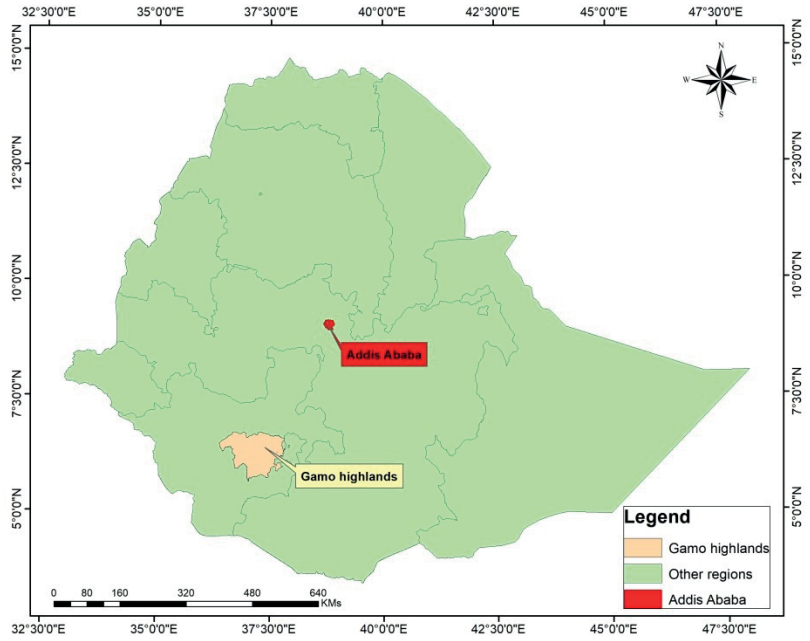
*Map 1.1: Map of Addis Ababa city, 2016*




*Source: taken from Addis Ababa mapping agency, 2016*

However, people from the particular ethnic group named Gamo have long dominated the occupation in Addis Ababa. This is even the case among school going working children. A school survey that I conducted showed that about 93.2% of school going child weavers (aged 10 to 18 years-old) in 2016 were from the Gamo ethnic group. Nonetheless, this study does not claim that weaving is solely practiced by the Gamo people in Ethiopia. It rather demonstrates that although members of many different ethnic groups practice weaving, the Gamo people have preserved an undisputed reputation and dominance in this occupation in Addis Ababa. The Gamo people are originally from the south-western Ethiopian highlands, namely, the Gamo highlands (see the map 1.2).

*Map 1.2: Map of Ethiopia, 2016*




*Source:* adapted from Ethiopian mapping agency 2016

Although the Gamo people have lived in different parts of the city, the majority of them reside in northern Addis Ababa, in Gulele sub-city (see map 1.1 above). A census report showed that about 52% of the Gamo residents in Addis Ababa live in Gulele sub-city (CSA 2007b). In this sub-city, many Gamo households make their living with weaving. A local government report revealed that for 67% of households in Gulele sub-city Woreda *06*[2], the primary source of income was weaving (*Gulele* sub-city urban planning office 2014: 55).

The generational composition of the labour force in the urban weaving economy consists of Gamo people at different life-stages including adults and children. These people participate in various work processes such as spinning, twisting thread, sewing, wrapping and embroidery. However, child weaving activities are emphasized and considered as a problem by government and NGOs (see chapter 4). In particular, baseline surveys by NGOs and development aid agencies (e.g.,

Zegers 2013, US Department of Labour 2012) reported a relatively high prevalence of exploitation of child weavers in Addis Ababa and rural towns in south-western Ethiopia such as the Gamo Gofa and Wolayita Zones. One study showed that 13% of the weavers in Addis Ababa were below the age of 18 (Alemayehu 2006: 7). Another study, a baseline survey by World Vision Ethiopia, revealed that over 50% of the home-based workplaces (weaving enterprises) in Gulele sub-city included child weavers in 2012 (See Zegers 2013: 11).

Apart from baseline research by NGOs, a relatively small number of academic studies that focus on child weavers in the weaving economy were carried out by post-graduate students of Addis Ababa University and a few other researchers (e.g., Zeleke 2015, Gedlu 2008, Yadeta 2002). By emphasizing the problems of child weaving activities, these studies tell a partial story about the nature of children's work and its potential benefits in the urban weaving economy. Many of these studies were framed in the light of the notion of work-free childhoods. This is also confirmed by Zeleke (2015: 77) who claimed that studies on child weavers focus on the negative impacts of work on schooling and children's overall development. Like many other child labour studies, much focus is also given to the immediate causes and effects of children's involvement in work. Among others, problems such as difficulty in attending school and the violation of child rights due to trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation, and debt bondage are highly stressed. As such, working in the weaving economy is depicted as deleterious to children's health, education and general wellbeing. As weaving has always been studied in relation to adversities and the problems of child weavers, the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs officially considers it to be a hazardous job for children (Pankhurst et al 2015: 107). According to ILO (2017: 11), activities enlisted as hazardous directly endanger children's safety, health and moral development and therefore need to be denounced. However, in relation to children's work in the weaving economy, the extent of the problems and the nature of work are less known. In addition, the

sociocultural meanings attached to childhood and work, as well as the relational fabric based on gender and generational differences, have received little scholarly attention. Although there are different production processes, little is known about the specific activities of various groups of children working in the weaving economy. Yet children's weaving practices are denounced with little understanding of the benefits and harm of each production process. Furthermore, the available studies overlook historical dimensions of children's work along with the broader political-economic processes of change. Based on these empirical gaps, my study therefore looks into children's work and their everyday lives, including the gendered and generational dynamics. By doing so, it emphasizes the local sociocultural understandings and practices that reinforce children's participation in different activities in the urban weaving economy, and the broader political-economic processes that restructure their childhoods and everyday lives. The dissertation specifically provides a response to the following research questions.

## 1.4 Research questions and objectives

The main research question that guides this study is: *How do the local sociocultural understandings of childhood and work interact with the broader political-economic processes in changing childhoods and children's involvement in different activities in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia?* In responding to this question and analysing changing childhoods, as will be elaborated in chapter 2, the concept of place serves as an intersection point between the local and global processes. By underscoring the physicality of places (Gieryn 2000: 465, Low 2009: 24), this study gives analytical focus to four spatial contexts (i.e. schools, home-based workplaces, the new workplaces (factories), and villages[3]. To this end, as a way to incorporate these four spatial contexts in my analysis, the above central research question is further broken-down into the following sets of interrelated questions.

1. How and to what extent have political-economic and historical processes transformed the urban weaving economy, and children's role in it?
2. How and in what ways do Gamo children cultivate weaving skills in the home and why do homes serve as sites of learning and work? What alternative means of developing weaving skills exist, and to what extent are these successful in producing competent weavers?
3. How do relations of gender and generation shape the acquisition of weaving skills in young people's lives and what is the role of workplaces (homes and factories) in this?
4. How do working children combine weaving and schooling and what is the role of schools in shaping children's everyday lives? What views do working children and adult weavers hold about school work and weaving?
5. How and to what extent has Gamo working children's access to money shaped peer relations and consumption cultures in village settings? How do working children's consumption practices influence their childhood experiences and in what ways do they interact with the processes of globalization?

In responding the above research questions, this study's main objective is to broaden the current understandings of changing childhoods and children's work. The thesis demonstrates how, with the coordinated efforts of state and non-state actors to have control over working children's bodies in particular localities (i.e., schools and workplaces), the global work-free childhoods ideal operates against the localized sociocultural understandings and attitudes that viewed childhood bodily qualities as an advantage to easily internalize the key traits of a weaver. In so doing, the thesis shows that the ideal of work-free childhoods is reductionist as it fails to take into account the implications of eliminating children's involvement in weaving work which will effectively eliminate the handloom textile industry.

## 1.5 Organization of the thesis

This thesis has a total of nine chapters including this first introduction chapter. In chapter 2, the integrated analytical framework of this study, referred to as *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing*, is developed to provide a holistic picture of children's work in urban Ethiopia. A holistic picture of children's work emphasizes development processes, and how the cultural and socioeconomic changes along with gendered and generational dimensions of work become exploitative and rewarding in particular geographies (Abebe & Bessell 2011: 781). In this regard, as highlighted in chapter 2, the *everyday politics of learning-by-doing* embraces key concepts that my study emphasize. These include childhood, generations, and social reproduction, along with the analytical lenses - sociocultural and political economy approaches - that will be integrated using the concept of place.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological orientation and choices of the study. It highlights how fieldwork was conducted, how research participants were approached and selected, and my positionality in the process of data collection. It also presents the data processing procedures and analysis, along with the ethical considerations related to research with children.

In chapter 4, the thesis provides a historical analysis of the changes on the urban weaving economy and childhoods across three different politico-historical periods since the early 20$^{th}$ century. It highlights the policy foci including when and how child weaving was considered as a problem. The chapter demonstrates how the interaction of broader and local processes transform the discourses of Ethiopian childhoods from what was 'invisible' in the imperial period, to 'crisis childhoods' during the socialist Derg regime, and then to the 'work-free childhoods' in the post-1991 developmental state.

Chapter 5 elaborates the processes of becoming a weaver highlighting how global and local discourses on children's bodies serve as key interacting variables in determining child weaving activities. It demonstrates the importance of childhood to cultivate greater skills of

weaving, showing children's contribution to the co-creation of value together with adults when learning how to weave in the home-based workplaces. By doing so, it underscores children's agency. The chapter argues that the global work-free childhood's discourse is reductionist insofar as it totally overlooks the localized standards and sociocultural understandings of childhoods and work in urban weaving economy.

Chapter 6 highlights how broader (i.e., enterprise development programs) and local processes (sociocultural practices of gendered and generational division of labour) feed each other to reinforce social differentiation and gendered inequality in the weaving economy. It focuses on gender and generational relations in the homes and factory settings and how these affect children's involvement in particular productive activities in the weaving economy. Furthermore, it provides an analysis of different skill groups that are structured by age, gender, generation and skill levels demonstrating that the weaving economy is not only about weaving; but also about various activities and life-phase transitions in different skill strata. Based on this, it challenges the anti-child labour and trafficking programmes that do not consider life-phase transitions and the gendered and generational characteristics of the different skills groups of workers.

Chapter 7 analyses how the interactions of the broader (i.e., anti-child labour programs that led to increased schooling) and the local processes (children's strategies in combining work and schooling) exposed working children to a time poverty and thereby creating 'busy childhoods'. It elaborates on the roles played by state and non-state actors, as part of their anti-child labour programmes, in claiming children's time and thereby regulating their bodies and minds by adding extra school work. Based on this, the chapter challenges the ideals of work-free childhoods claiming that it has disrupted social reproductive patterns by slowing down children's skills cultivation, and thus deskilling young Gamo people.

Chapter 8 introduces the idea of 'monetized childhoods' which refers to the localized consumption cultures of working children in the village

settings as shaped by broader processes of globalization. As highlighted in the chapter, access to money contributes to the creation and reproduction of particular forms of masculinities and femininities. The chapter challenges the work-free childhoods discourse as it solely focuses on the productive dimension of children's work, overlooking young people's consumption cultures and its effects in shaping children's participation in different activities, and reinforcing young peoples' gendered identities.

The final chapter, chapter 9, provides a synthesis of the findings and a concluding remark. The chapter argues how the interactions of local and global processes create multiple childhood experiences for the same group of working children. It concludes that due to the international anti-child labour discourses and practices in the urban weaving economy, the shifting social reproductive patterns have slowed down children's skills acquisition as well as life-phase transitions. Finally, the chapter proposes for the reassessment of abolitionist approach towards child weaving, and suggests replacing it with a regulatory approach.

## Notes

[1] Traditional clothes that is common in Ethiopia.

[2] Woreda is the lowest level of government administrative structure. This Woreda is located near Shiro Meda market (approximately 2 kilometres from the market centre).

[3] In this study, I use the term village to refer to those sub-urban neighbourhoods in the research site. According to a key informant from Gulele subcity Micro and small scale enterprises office, the city of Addis Ababa is organized in five spatial units for administrative purposes (KII notes, 2016). These are respectively the city itself, sub-cities, Woredas, Mender (villages) and Ketena (sub-villages). Village is, therefore, the fourth lowest unit mostly having a population of a few thousands of people. For instance, Meketeya Sefer, one of the villages I studied, had a total population of 3,910 people. The villages where I conducted this research are known for having Gamo communities with specialization of labour and crafts in the weaving economy.

# 2 The everyday politics of learning-by-doing: analytical framework

## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce and discuss the key concepts and approaches employed in my study. I do so with the purpose of developing an integrated non-binary analytical framework that merges local and global childhood's approaches into the analysis of children's work. This framework, referred to as the everyday politics of learning-by-doing, integrates the relevant concepts with a political economy and sociocultural lenses.

As addressed earlier, in mainstream child labour studies, an analysis of children's work is usually framed by the ideals of work-free childhoods. As a result, most definitions of child labour, in particular, in the context of the Global South, do not encompass all forms of children's work (Bhukuth 2008: 392). By focusing on children's productive activities, mainstream child labour studies also often overlook dimensions of consumption (Zelizer 2002) and thereby fail to provide a holistic picture of childhoods and the outcomes of work (Aufseeser et al 2018: 246). Therefore, to provide yet fuller explanations of children's work, and following key scholarly suggestions (see e.g., Abebe & Bessell 2011: 781, Aufseeser et al 2018: 254, Bourdillon 2015), this chapter develops an analytical framework to broaden the current understandings of childhoods and work.

The analytical framework developed here thus aims to provide a holistic picture of children's work. This is achieved by highlighting how children's work is interrelated with development processes, and how the cultural and socioeconomic changes, together with the geographic and gendered dimensions of work, may become both exploitative and rewarding (Abebe & Bessell 2011: 781). In particular, in providing a

holistic picture of children's work, this thesis teases out: 1) the social reproduction of handloom weaving and the role of children in the production of hand-woven fabrics, along with the gendered and generational dimensions of such work; 2) drawing from both historical and contemporary processes, the global and local forces that bring about changes in childhoods and the handloom weaving sector; 3) the consumption cultures of working children and how these reinforce gendered identities.

Through this analytical exercise, this thesis hopes to be insightful by demonstrating how local and global forces of change create and reinforce multiple childhood experiences for the same groups of children (in our case; Gamo working children in the weaving economy) depending on the particular localities where those children spend their everyday lives. Among others, the particular localities (spatial contexts) and the childhood experiences include respectively villages and monetized childhoods (chapter 8), homes and children's learning-by-doing practices (chapter 5), factories and the politics of age (chapters 4 & and 7), and schools and busy childhoods (see chapter 7). Through this analytical exercise, the thesis sheds light on changes and continuities – both on in the meanings associated to childhoods and to children's work.

Furthermore, by using *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing*, this dissertation explains the changing patterns of children's work by disrupting binary categories of local and global childhoods. This involves an analysis of children's work in relation to broader political-economic processes, whilst at the same time situating the conceptualizations of childhoods (including gender and generational dimensions) and agency in children's own terms in particular places. There is a growing amount of research that seeks to disrupt the static categories of local and global and attempts to bridge the epistemological separation between the socially constructed and the social-structural childhood approaches (see for e.g., Katz 2004, Cheney 2007, Abebe 2008a, Levine 2011, and Wells 2015). Therefore, this study contributes to the growing literature that integrates local and global childhood analysis.

In this research, the local is understood in relation to the everyday practices and interactions of children among peer groups and with adults in their localities including workplaces, schools and villages. The global refers to universal and national processes such as the neoliberal policy of promoting the private sector through enterprise development programmes, universal education policies (with components such as creating access to primary education and ensuring quality education), and anti-child labour programmes and campaigns that are inspired by policies of multilateral organizations such as the ILO. The global also encompasses the term globalization in the sense of the spread of ideas from one part of the world to the other through ideological and economic processes, and the universalization of education (Fleer et al 2008: 2). Global and national policies are usually implemented at the local level, meaning that the local and global are interconnected although the relationships between them are blurred (Hanson et al 2018).

In integrating the local and global and thereby understanding the implications they have for childhoods and children's work, this study makes use of sociocultural as well as political economy approaches as analytical tools following Abebe & Bessell (2011: 780) and Philo (2000: 253), who recommend using both approaches. As discussed below, this is accomplished by using a relational concept of 'place' as a lens and as an ontological foundation (understanding of how the world is comprised) in my study.

In using place as a lens, I argue that the local and the global serve as co-constituting dynamics rather than opposing ends of the scale. Place, in this regard, is not only about the local or the global, but the combination of the two (local and global). As argued below, such an analysis involves explaining children's work as shaped by localized sociocultural practices in places such as workplaces, school settings, and villages; but also as shaped by broader development discourses (such as global discourses on anti-child labour) in those same places -emphasizing generational and gender relations, agency, division of labour, and changing patterns of children's labour-power[1].

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I explain the relevant concepts and link them together to develop the integrated analytical framework.

## 2.2 Integrating local-global childhood approaches

Across different places, times and academic disciplines, childhood is understood in multiple ways (James et al 1998, Mayall 2012, Woodhead 2009, Alanen 2014, Balagopalan 2014, Fleer et al 2008). In this research, however, the more useful conceptualizations of childhood are found in the paradigm of childhood sociology that emerged in the 1990s (Leonard 2016, Alanen 2014, James & Prout 1997, Qvortrup 1994, James et al 1998). In this paradigm, childhood is conceptualized differently than studies that viewed it as a period of biological immaturity. It is rather explained from the vantage point of specific sociocultural and structural components of societies, and as a variable of social analysis along with class, gender and ethnicity (Qvortrup 2000: 79, James & Prout 1997: 8). This view goes against the earlier understanding of childhood socialization practices that depicted children as passive individuals (Balagopalan 2014: 12).

Most studies in the paradigm of childhood sociology have followed either a localized or a globalized analysis of childhoods (Cregan & Cuthbert 2014, Wells 2015). A relatively growing literature also integrates these two (Hanson et al 2018). Local childhoods in particular illustrate the unique experiences of children in their immediate environment. In local childhood studies, children are constructed as social actors who are capable of making decisions about their lives (Bell and Payne 2009, Evans 2011, Payne 2012). Analysis of local childhoods is usually guided by the socially constructed child approach which rejects the existence of a universal childhood (James et al 1998: 112). Childhood is rather explained on the basis of meanings and cultural practices in the local environment including the variables of age, gender, capability, and other identities of the person. As such, scholars in this realm have a

commitment to radical relativism, with no essential distinction of the child from an adult.

The definition used by global childhoods is mainly influenced by the western childhood model. This model has been promoted by state and non-state actors including international organizations (Nieuwenhuys 1998, Fleer et al 2008). Humanitarian and charity organizations in particular play an important role in promoting a universal image of childhood which is associated with a period of life free from human rights violence, and the protection of children from sexual and labour exploitation (Burman 1994). In this sense, childhood is increasingly viewed from the perspective of child rights as well as children's needs. Drawing on a needs-based perspective, a globalized discourse of childhood is constructed by portraying children as vulnerable, and in need of protection (Collings & Davies 2008). The need-based perspective became more dominant after the 1940s, in response to the humanitarian crises of the post-war period (Bissell et al 2006). It is justified by classical understandings of socialization that always associate childhood with a period of incompleteness, a state of becoming, and a preparatory phase (Qvortrup 1994: 2). Children are, therefore, perceived to need education and other social services to enable them to learn necessary life-skills, whilst staying away from undesirable social, economic, psychological and cultural conditions.

Additionally, through the promotion of children's rights, another global childhood discourse has been constructed in particular during and after the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). No doubt, there has been a seachange in the way childhood is understood and defined after the UNCRC (Hanson et al 2018, Arts 2016). In this sense, a contemporary symbol of global childhood portrays children as right bearing individuals just like adults (Reynaert et al 2009).

Analysis of global childhoods is mainly guided by a social structural child approach that characterizes childhood as constructed through generational and structural processes, and as being determined by

societal parameters such as politics, economy, and technology. Thus, childhood is analysed in light of broader processes of change such as modernization and capitalism (Qvortrup 2000: 79, 2014, Leonard 2016). It is also explained as part of the 'generational order' which shows the generational position of children vis-à-vis adults (Mayall 2012). This is mainly used in demographic studies that stratify populations as children and adults (Qvortrup 2000). In this perspective childhood is depicted as having universal characteristics (Qvortrup 1994, 2014, Mayall 2012, Alanen 2005, 2014).

Importantly, both the global and local childhood's analyses have their own merits and shortcomings. Although global childhood analyses have pushed children's issues to the centre of international policy agendas, they often fail to take into account local sociocultural practices and children's everyday actions. Due to this, policies guided by global childhoods discourses often are overly prescriptive and generalized, fail to have due regard to the local context, lead to wastage of resources and, in some cases, endangering children's well-being (Bissell et al 2006, Bourdillon et al 2010). Studies on local childhoods, on the other hand, often overlook the growing impacts of globalization and the influence of politico-economic and ideological forces (Balagopalan 2014, Holloway & Valentine 2000: 770). In this sense, analysis of local childhoods has increasingly placed children outside the state and politics (Balagopalan 2014). Therefore, an analytical exercise to cross-link and merge the local and global approaches is useful for a better understanding of changing childhoods (Hanson et al 2018, Leonard 2016, Holloway & Valentine 2000, James et al 1998: 123). A relational concept, however, is needed to break down the analytical separation of local and global childhoods, and integrate the two. The concept of 'place' serves this purpose in this research, as will be explained in the next section.

## 2.3 Using place as a lens to integrate local-global childhoods

Different relational concepts are used in childhood and youth studies to explain the localized experiences of young people in relation to global processes. 'Place' is one of them (Farrugia 2015, Farrugia & Wood 2017, Mannion 2007, Holloway & Valentine 2000). Although place denotes different meanings and is sometimes used interchangeably with space, in this research, it refers to a particular form of space or context where children spend their time for various reasons such as schooling, work, play and others (Thrift 2003: 91, James & James 2008: 129). The everyday lives of children take place in concrete, physical places (Rasmussen 2004: 155). In this research, place is used to explain both spatial and social relations (Lefebvre 1991, Gieryn 2000, Low 2009). Importantly, the spatial and the social interact with each other as the social production of places (spatiality) occurs due to webs of social relationships and processes. Global processes operate in particular physical localities and these places are where the everyday material practices and social relations happen (Katz 1994, Massey 1994, Low 2009). Thus, particular places serve as intersection points of social analysis to understand how children are affected by global and local processes and, at the same time, how they have exercised their agency in their everyday lives. Based on this, my study argues that the lens of place helps to intertwine local and global childhoods.

Importantly, in using place as a lens, my study emphasizes four spatial contexts as centres of analysis. Located in the research site, these spatial contexts are the village setting, the home, the school, and the factories. Specifically, by examining children's interactions with adults and among peer groups in these localities and studying how these places are targeted for social policy and development purposes (i.e., enterprise development, school expansion and anti-child labour programmes) my study looks into the cross-linkages between broader and local processes in changing childhoods. For instance, as highlighted in chapter 7 of this study, schools serve as places where international NGOs execute anti-child

labour programmes through various measures such as extra school work for working children. However, several children continued to be involved in weaving, in the face of increased moves of NGOs to mitigate child labour. They employ various strategies to combine increased school work with weaving. This demonstrates the interaction of global (anti-child labour campaigns) and local (children's localized work by adopting different strategies) in children's everyday places (such as school settings) contributing to the creation of 'busy childhoods' – a childhood different from childhoods a few decades ago (chapter 7). This study, therefore, argues that particular spatial contexts are important spaces to see the interactions of global and local processes in changing childhoods.

In the view of modern childhood, children are expected to spend more time in places designated for them such as schools (James et al 1998, James & James 2008). Places are produced for different purposes (Lefebvre 1991). In most cases, the social production of places (spatiality) happens for the sake of development. Whilst development interventions in the Global North are mostly based on maintaining the existing physical spaces and cities created by past developments, construction of new places such as workplaces, schools and markets has been, by-and-large, at the heart of development in the Global South. Katz (2004) reported this dynamic in the context of rural Sudan, explaining how children's places were disrupted by large-scale state sponsored agricultural projects affecting the everyday activities of rural people, particularly working children. This shows the importance of places for the micro and macro analysis of childhood as global processes are both local and global and operate in particular places. The material relations that are influenced by both global and local matters produce local processes (Holloway & Valentine 2000: 767).

Children's everyday places are important in (re)shaping childhoods and (re)constructing children's identities (Holloway & Valentine 2000, James et al 1998: 38-39). As Mannion (2007: 406) argued, many different types of places, including the school, arts centre and social media, develop our understanding on how childhood and adulthood are framed

socio-spatially. Whilst schools portray the child as pupil, childcare centres like orphanages show the child in need of protection. Moreover, streets where homeless children live denote children as undisciplined, delinquents, deviants, and innocent victims (Bordonaro 2012, Aptekar & Abebe 1997). However, the perspectives of children can be quite different, for example viewing streets as normal workplaces (Belay 2016). Thus, due to webs of connections with broader social and economic processes, children's identities and places are co-produced together. In relation to this, Massey stated:

> …relations in a particular place stretch 'beyond' as the global, as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside. The particularity of any place is constructed not by fixing boundaries around it but precisely through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that 'beyond' places (Massey 1994: 5).

As such, children's local lives are interconnected with dynamic global processes (Katz 2004). Due to this, place serves as an ontological foundation (the form and nature of reality) of my study. Philo (2000: 253) stated that:

> Scholarship on the spaces of childhood must focus on more than just the specifics of particular sets of children in particular places, and must do more than just probe the micro scale, agency-based geographies of childhood behaviour, experience, perception and fantasy… Our scholarship must also look to the larger picture encompassing many different sets of children spread across many different places, and must accept the challenge of tackling the macro-scale, structure-based geographies of childhood as shaped by broad brush political-economic and social-cultural transformations.

In this respect, place involves a relational thinking to link local and global processes (Massey 1994: 5, Farrugia & Wood 2017: 210). Although relational thinking may mean different things, in this research, it refers to an analytical exercise of tying up relationships, interactions, negotiations, networks and frictions in everyday lives and power dynamics (Huijsmans 2016: 4). Such an analytical exercise helps to break down the static binary between agency/structure and local/global (Massey 1994). Because, as part of relational thinking, place embraces

not only global processes such as neoliberal capitalism, but also the politics of particular places (Farrugia & Wood 2017: 211, Farrugia 2015, Gibson-Graham 2006). This indicates that conceptualizations of the global and local are not irreconcilably split, but by using place as a lens, they can be bounded together (Massey 1994, Woodman & Wyn 2015: 144). Such an analytical exercise gives a nuanced and deepened insight into the interactions of global processes and children's 'local worlds' (Holloway & Valentine 2000).

The use of places varies in time, just like the dinner table can be changed into a drawing site and a bedroom may be used as a spatial symbol of punishment (James et al 1998). This demonstrates that time and place are interconnected insofar as the temporal moment happens to be spatial (Massey 1994, Farrugia & Wood 2017: 213). Moreover, questions such as who is a child, what is childhood, and what is appropriate work for a child, are not epistemological per se; rather they are both temporal and spatial in nature as the answers depend on where (the place) and when (the time) the questions are asked (Cregan & Cuthbert 2014: 19). As in many cases, the temporal structuring of children's everyday lives differs from place to place. Hence, understanding the different meanings attached to the use of places constitutes a time dimension (temporality). It is mainly for this reason that my research employs a historical perspective, emphasizing the changes and continuities in the weaving economy in urban Ethiopia across different time periods (see chapter 4).

In childhood places, the central issue to be explored is control (James et al 1998). Adults usually control children's actions in different places: a sort of power exercise to shape childhood behaviour (Alanen 2001, Gallagher 2011). In this regard, different spatial contexts, such as schools, the playground, the dinner table, the streets, and even children's own bedrooms all serve to regulate and discipline the actions of children's bodies and minds (James et al 1998). For instance, children's bodies are prohibited from engaging in productive activities in factory settings (chapter 4). In contrast, home-based workplaces serve as key

places where children's bodies are involved in various economic activities (chapter 5). Therefore, in the analysis of children's everyday lives in particular spatial contexts, the discourses of children's bodies should not be ignored as the places and the meanings of bodies feed each other.

## 2.4 Place and children's bodies

This study found it insightful to attend to the local and global discourses of 'children's bodies' for a broader understanding of changing childhoods and children's work. In particular, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, attending to the discourses of working children's bodies is analytically helpful as children's work is mostly related to the engagement of their bodies in the production of value. It is mainly in specific spatial and sociocultural contexts that skills are inscribed onto children's bodies (see chapter 5). Equally, these same children's bodies are targeted for programme interventions due to international discourses on child labour that are at odds with local contexts (see chapter 4). This resonates with Robson (2011: 160) who showed that the global work-free childhoods discourse generally depicts children's bodies as vulnerable and incapable of performing certain tasks. This view contradicts local discourses that present children's bodies as embodying the qualities to easily cultivate important skills (see chapter 5).

A considerable scholarship in childhood studies has directly or indirectly attended to children's bodies and the meanings and discourses associated with them in particular localities (including, Valentine 2011, Nayak & Kehily 2013, Robson 2011, Reay 2001, Coffey & Watson 2014). In this sense, places and bodies are interconnected insofar as no human body takes action outside of a place (Nast & Pile 1998). In different places, children's corporeal bodies are classed, gendered, sexualized, racialized, and (dis)abled (Nast & Pile 1998, Colls & Hörschelmann 2011). In this regard, Wolputte (2004: 264) eloquently stated how the body serves as a canvas on which major social, cultural, and political changes are projected.

However, depending on sociocultural and institutional expectations, the discourses, meanings, images, and expectations of children's bodies differ from place to place. In schools, children's bodies are expected to conform to authority for the sake of learning and becoming productive workers of the future (Valentine 2011). In contrast, in particular cultural and spatial contexts, children's bodies are believed to embody important qualities that make them more productive than adults' bodies. The literature on 'nimble fingers', for instance, presented children's bodies as more vital than adults' in the Indian and Pakistani carpet industries (see for e.g. Cox 1999). In this discourse, children's bodies are presented through the lens of capability, outperforming adults' bodies in the production of some valuable products. Likewise, in sub-Saharan Africa, children are believed to have the right bodily qualities to undertake certain tasks (Robson 2011). The case of Ethiopian children working in the weaving economy is not so different, as their bodies are said to have bodily advantages and children are said to be better able than adults to acquire the skills required for weaving. In the home, children's physical size and strength, as opposed to chronological age, serve as key local standards that influence their involvement in the weaving economy (see chapter 5). This is not, however, the case for all children as the bodies of girls are less favoured and considered unsuitable for weaving (see chapter 6). In contrast, in many Latin American and Asian societies, female bodies are expected to perform weaving (see for e.g., Kruger 2001, Cosson 2017).

Places play an important role in territorializing human bodies in some specific ways (Nast & Pile 1998: 3). Schools, for instance, are used as spaces in which to acculturate children's bodies to the norms of adults. Workplaces, in contrast, are designated as spaces for adults' bodies (see chapter 4). In this regard, apart from body, chronological age intersects to structure childhood and adulthood places. This shows how children's bodies are segregated from grown-ups both spatially and socially, not only through the schooling system and parents' boundaries in the homes, but also through age-specific laws in workplaces (Valentine 2011: 31).

Therefore, attending to discourses of children's bodies and how these intersect with other variables such as age and gender is essential to broaden our understanding of childhoods in different places and thereby provide a well-grounded analysis on children's work.

## 2.5 Analysing children's work

Like childhoods, children's work has been understood and interpreted in different and contrasting ways across the social sciences and development studies. The main difference arises from a debate on cultural relativism vis-à-vis a universal definition of childhood already discussed above (Myers 2001, Burman 1994, White 1999). Cultural relativism stems from the various understandings of 'what is childhood?', 'who is a child?' and 'what is appropriate work for a child?' in different places and times. As such, the local conceptions regarding childhood and a child are relevant to the definition of appropriate work for children insofar as these are interconnected.

However, most studies explain children's work using the ILO's strictly economic definition of child labour (Bhukuth 2008: 392). ILO defines child labour based on the nature of children's work, the number of hours worked, and the economic status of children. Generally, work that is believed to create physical, mental, moral and social harm to children, and interferes with their schooling is considered to be child labour (ILO 2002). The ILO's definition also encompasses the worst forms of child labour, including children's involvement in all forms of slavery, child prostitution and banned activities such as the production and distribution of illicit drugs. Furthermore, ILO's definition attends to specific categories of child workers based on their involvement in schooling. These are full-time workers with no schooling, those who combine work and schooling, and those who are neither at work nor at school (ibid). Although the definition by the ILO does not encompass all forms of children's work (such as reproductive work), it helps to make a distinction between different categories of children for research and

social policy purposes. In this research, the focus is on those children who combine work and schooling.

The other reason for having multiple interpretations of children's work arises from an absence of a clear boundary between 'child work' and 'child labour'. These two terms have long been contentious in the literature, with little consensus among many researchers as to how they are defined (Nieuwenhuys 1996, White 1999, ILO 2004, Bourdillon 2006, 2015, Bourdillon et al 2010, Ennew et al 2005, Ansell 2005, Edmonds 2009).

The distinction between child work and child labour is found less useful in social policy practice. Such a binary category has also been less helpful in analytical terms (Aufseeser et al 2018, Bourdillon 2015, White 1995: 13, James et al 1998: 110). For instance, Ennew et al (2005: 27) listed several interpretations of 'child labour', explaining that no single and correct definition of all working children can be found. However, the bourgeoning literature utilizes the phrase child labour, usually equating it with harmful work (Aufseeser et al 2018).

With child labour in its broadest sense, the work-free childhoods discourse has greatly shaped discussions pertaining to children's work in applied and academic research, and in governmental and intergovernmental policies (Ennew et al 2005). Various theoretical orientations are encapsulated in work-free childhoods. Among others, the labour market, human capital, social responsibility, and child-centred perspectives all present arguments to justify work-free childhoods (see for e.g., Ennew et al 2005, Myers 2001). Furthermore, it is (re)produced by many organizations in the world of practice. For instance, in spite of their varied interests and policy orientations, various international development organizations including the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, ILO, and WTO operate in the framework of work-free childhoods (Myers 2001, Cullen 2007). Many studies coming out of these multilateral organizations emphasize the relationships between child labour and some key variables such as poverty, human rights, and schooling (Bourdillon 2006: 1202).

Apart from mainstream work-free childhoods, the other way of analysing children's work which has gained relative popularity in the literature is the multiple childhoods' perspective (Bourdillon 2006, Balagopalan 2014). Researchers that work along this perspective explain children's work in relation to the cultural contexts in which children grow up, and as part of social interactions in particular localities (Liebel 2004: 210, Woodhead 2009, Abebe & Bessell 2011). Furthermore, they emphasize the material conditions of children's work based on local meanings attached to age, gender, and the capability of the child. In this view, work can be considered normal for the development of children and a useful component of their everyday socialization.

Bourdillon (2015: 2) noted that many societies in sub-Saharan Africa nurture their children based on an ingrained notion that work is part of the process of growing up. In the broadest sense, children's work is perceived as a form of education, as part of a normal day-to-day routine insofar as their everyday activities and chores in the family and community help them develop essential skills. This view fits uneasily with international campaigns against child labour that are based on the work-free childhoods discourses discussed above (Aufseeser et al 2018).

A key criticism of the multiple childhoods perspective is its particularistic nature, neglecting broader processes of social change (Qvortrup 1994, 2005). While the multiple childhoods perspective has added a more nuanced view of children, challenging the pathological understanding of non-western childhoods, it has increasingly placed the cultural worlds of children outside of the state, history, and the market (Balagopalan 2014: 12). No place has been left untouched by the manifestations of 'modernity' with its tendency towards the globalization of experiences (James et al 1998: 205). Yet multiple childhoods fails to consider the effects of structural processes on childhoods and children's work.

A more recent way of analysing children's work originates from the traditions of political economy analysis. This is relatively new in childhood studies (Hart 2008). Researchers working along this line aim

to understand the localized experiences of child workers in light of broader processes of change such as globalization, capitalism, neoliberalism, and modernization (see for e.g,, Katz 2004, Robson 2004b, Hart 2008, Bachman 2000, Abebe 2007, 2017). Capitalist and neo-liberal economic reforms such as trade liberalization, deregulation and withdrawal of the state, and a greater role for the private sector and markets have restructured children's productive and reproductive roles (Katz 2004). For instance, trade liberalization policies have contributed to deepening of informality in production through increased sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements in many developing countries (Verick 2006, Williams & Lansky 2013). This has led to the emergence of new markets in the globalizing world for the goods produced by children who work in the informal economy (Punch & Sugden 2013). As such, by using a political economy lens, childhoods and children's work are analysed in conjunction with structural processes that have wide-ranging effects on children's everyday lives. However, the main limitation of a political economy analysis is that as it gives primacy to historical and structural processes - it overlooks children's perspectives, undermining their agency (Leonard 2016: 38, Alanen 2014: 136).

Thus, as discussed above, studies on working children have been influenced by various ways of analysing childhood. Consequently, they follow varying perspectives, although much of the literature is situated within the work-free childhoods perspective. In addition, most academic studies on children's work fail to show cross-linkages between macro (global) and micro (local) childhood approaches (Abebe 2017: 2, Leonard 2016: 117-120, James et al 1998: 104-105). In an attempt to show the plurality of childhoods and to demonstrate children's agency, dominant research has emphasized micro childhoods in particular localities (Leonard 2016, Balagopalan 2014). Likewise, several other studies attempted to situate childhoods in a global perspective, emphasizing broader processes of change such as universal education initiatives and other global development programmes (including Wells 2015, Cregan & Cuthbert 2014, Aitken 2013). This has limited the

development of new literature on children's work beyond classifying the various work arrangements such as paid, unpaid, home-based, street-based, and so on but failing to analyse the interrelationships between local and global childhoods and children's work (Leonard 2016, James et al 1998, Bourdillon et al 2010, Bourdillon 2015).

Consequently, as argued below, in order to benefit from the analytical merits of structure-based and agency-based childhoods approaches, and to avoid the shortcomings that arise from using only one of these, my study employs political economy and sociocultural lenses to analyse children's work. The sections below elaborate each of these, along with the consequences of using both approaches together.

### 2.5.1 Sociocultural approach

There are many theorizations regarding childhood development and learning in the fields of developmental psychology and education. However, for this research, I found a sociocultural approach more appropriate than that of other theorizations of childhood as many academic works on childhood development and learning (such as Piaget & Inhelder 1973, Skinner 1990) seldom pay sufficient attention to the social and cultural aspects. Instead, they emphasize individualized developmental trajectories and internalization processes of knowledge (Rogoff 2008, Corsaro 1992: 183). A sociocultural approach, in contrast, focuses on children's learning and their development, giving emphasis to the cultural context and underlining the interdependence of both individual as well as social processes in cultivating knowledge and skills in the micro-environment (Rogoff 1990, 2003, Woodhead 2009: 7, John-Steiner & Mahn 1996: 192). A Russian educational psychologist named Vygotsky first introduced this approach. Vygotsky viewed children's development as culturally and historically constructed. He believed that children's competence is founded in social relationships, and shaped by cultural practices (Vygotsky 1978). Therefore, in utilizing a sociocultural approach, the central concept is children's work has its own social and cultural meanings, and has to be understood in the specific context

(Rogoff 1990: Gashkins et al 1992, Abebe & Bessell 2011: 770). In this respect, the child's cultural development happens at two levels; first at the social level (interpsychological) or between people, and second, within the child (intrapsychological), in which the child internalizes and appropriates societal cultural practices - skills and abilities - from everyday social interactions and learning encounters (Vygotsky 1978: 57). In this same vein, children's involvement in weaving activities is understood and explained as constituting both individualized as well as collective development process contributing to the reproduction of the labour force in the weaving economy (see chapter 5).

In studying children's work, a description of the type of activities and working conditions alone is not sufficient. Instead, generating a well-grounded understanding of children's work requires an analysis of the historical, social, cultural and economic conditions that influence the lives, capacities, individual motives and self-image of children as collective groups. This serves as a useful analytical exercise as part of a sociocultural framework. In particular, drawing from Liebel (2004), the following important aspects are integrated in the sociocultural analysis of children's work:

> • The sociocultural context, e.g. whether the children's work is embedded in a culture that recognizes, or rejects, the work of children;
> • The socioeconomic situation of the children, e.g. whether they work because of material need or from motives of their own;
> • The motivation of children, e.g. whether they identify with their work (because they find it interesting, or wish to help support their family) or experience it as a burden to the mental and psychological resources of the children, e.g. whether they are able to judge their experience of work and process it mentally, and if they are aware of their rights;
> • The social status of children, e.g. whether they receive support from the neighbourhood or through educational projects, and/or have organized themselves in order to be able to defend themselves better (Liebel 2004: 209-210).

Whilst integrating the aforementioned points that Liebel identified, a sociocultural analysis focuses on four key aspects. Firstly, it focuses on the immediate sociocultural environment in which the child lives as

being central to learning, and to the everyday lives – thus giving importance to cultural variations, and their interrelationships with children's development (Corsaro 1992, 1997). This is dealt with in my research in relation to the underlying reasons of children's involvement in weaving practices, and the sociocultural factors that influence the process of becoming a weaver (see chapter 5). Secondly, it stresses the importance of social interactions between children and adults during the learning process (Vygotsky 1978). This involves learning relations as well as relations among peer groups. Thirdly, it considers children as active participants in the development of skills contributing to the co-construction of knowledge (Corsaro 1992: 163). This is related to, as highlighted below, a recognition of children's agency in learning practices. Lastly, it emphasizes dialectical relations demonstrating learning as an individualized as well as a social process - showing the interdependence of individual and social developments (John-Steiner & Mahn 1996: 192). This dialectical relation, which is understood as interpretive reproduction, is also explained in broader detail below. In the subsequent sections, I discuss how a sociocultural analysis includes the useful concepts of interpretive reproduction and agency that are insightful for this research.

### *Interpretive reproduction*

A key scholar in childhood studies who utilized and expanded Vygotskian sociocultural analysis is William Corsaro. He added a constructivist flavour into the sociocultural mode of analysis. While sociocultural analysis prioritizes collective processes, recognizing the primacy of social interactions and pre-existing cultural practices in a given social environment (Vygotsky 1978: 57), a constructivist analysis adheres to individual development, focusing on the internal processes in children's minds and giving emphasis to the meanings individuals (from within the human) give to different sets of activities (Corsaro 1992: 162). As such, in spite of its recognition of individuals' life trajectories and learning as unique, the constructivist view[2] gravitates towards linear developmental stages that are universalistic, leading to adulthood

maturity. Although both constructivist and sociocultural perspectives recognize children's agency, they differ in conceptualizing the developmental path young peoples in which one gives priority to individual development, and the other stresses the primacy of social and cultural factors. Corsaro's contribution merges these two contrasting perspectives, expanding the sociocultural mode of analysis by introducing the concept of interpretive reproduction in childhood studies.

Interpretive reproduction provides an analysis of children's development as individuals as well as collective beings in which, through interaction with others and entering into a social relations, they develop knowledge and skills, whilst at the same time, continuously building and (re)producing the social order (Corsaro 1992: 170, 1997, 2012). In this process, children have an active role in shaping their own developmental experiences while also contributing to societal development. Furthermore, they are conceptualized as human beings, responding to and negotiating with adults in their everyday lives (Gaskins et al 1992: 6). Thus, learning processes in interpretive reproduction emphasize the mutuality of social interactions with bi-directional relations in contrast to the doctrine of a unidirectional socialization (Corsaro 1992: 3).

Corsaro's work of interpretive reproduction primarily focuses on the nature of peer culture based on research in Italian and United States preschools. His analysis is based on peer relations and their use of time, including children's play. Peer groups can differ in size, whether they are single or mixed sex, whether the members are in uniform or mixed age groups (Ansell 2005). In different societies, the relevance of peer groups varies, although, in many ways, children's peers are becoming more important in their lives, mainly in school settings. For instance, in poor urban communities and rural parts of Africa, several children ranging from toddlers to older ones are often found in groups in the care and supervision of two or more teenagers (Evans 2011). These children spend more time together and grow up together. Despite limited research in childhood studies on this matter thus far, this shows that

many children in the Global South likely grow up with peers (Tisdall & Punch 2012).

The notion of interpretive reproduction, nonetheless, misses a key component of the Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective: More Knowledgable Others (MKOs)[3]. This concept underscores that learning is usually guided by those members of the society who are more experienced and skilful (Vygotsky 1978). This is a useful concept in this research insofar as it emphasizes intergenerational and gendered relations between working children who possess varied levels of skills and adults, and whose interaction with each other led to increased weaving skills.

However, the concept of MKOs is employed in this research in a modified version, by considering the differences in research contexts. Whereas Vygotsky used MKO to explain preschool children's language development in Russia based on social interactions with more knowledgeable adults, this research looks at the dynamics of weaving skills development, including the processes of becoming a weaver, through interactions between Gamo children and adults. In many instances, adult weavers have accumulated several years of experience and possess advanced weaving skills. As a result, they are locally called '*tibebegna'* (literally: creative). The term *tibebegna* is thus linked with Vygotsky's MKOs insofar as it is mainly under the guidance of *tibebegna* weavers that one cultivates greater weaving skills in the urban Ethiopian context. Then again, my empirical findings reveal that in many instances some children can also be more knowledgeable than others (see chapter 5). In this respect, through interactions with more experienced child weavers, one can develop weaving skills. Nonetheless, as weaving skills greatly vary based on experience, *tibebegna* should be understood as a relative expression that has different meanings among among different groups of weavers (see chapter 6). Therefore, in the analysis of interpretive reproduction, this research applies the concept of MKOs in a modified version, using the term *tibebegna* to better explain learning practices.

However, in utilizing interpretive reproduction, usage of common terms pertaining childhood socialization such as 'learning processes', 'learning' and 'acquiring' are considered as problematic as these terms usually represent a unilateral transmission of knowledge and skills, from adults to children concealing young peoples' active roles (Gaskins et al 1992: 7). Furthermore, these terms depict children as passive recipients of knowledge who appropriate the already existing adults' culture, undermining their agency. Therefore, using an appropriate term that explains children's active roles in their everyday learning processes is important.

Several scholars employed the term 'apprenticeship' to show children's active roles in developing skills (see for e.g., Rogoff 2008, Amanor-Wilks 2016, Hanson 2005, Olaoye 1989, Coy 1989). This is also the case of studies in the African context in which apprenticeship is particularly used to demonstrate the processes children pass through to become skilful in different crafts including weaving (Fluitman 1992). In Ghana, for instance, children's involvement in weaving is viewed as a form of traditional apprenticeship that begins in childhood (Dede 2016). In this practice, parents traditionally offer toy looms to their children from an early age (starting from age 8) so that their children can internalize a weavers' identity. However, Ghanaian children's weaving practices are recently attached to human rights violence and labour exploitation. This is precisely the case in the Ethiopian weaving economy as well (see chapter 4). In Nigeria, children from the Hausa community engage in weaving activities which is also understood as a traditional apprenticeship (Deafenbaugh 1989). Hausa weavers kept a social hierarchy, based on their skill levels, in which leading to the dependence of junior weavers on the senior. Apprenticeship relations between the junior and senior weavers ensured the survival of a craft community for over a century serving as a means of skill transfer across generations. Similarly, a key defining feature of Gamo weavers in Ethiopia is the existence of skill-based hierarchy among weavers, which is the basis of social reproduction of the handloom weaving economy (see chapter 6).

This thesis, therefore, underscores the importance of apprenticeship relations to reveal children's active roles and the transfer of skills across generations.

However, apprenticeship is differently used in the literature. This research, therefore, approaches apprenticeship more critically insofar as it refers to many things including among others, an active involvement of the less-experienced (usually children) in a culturally organized activity (Rogoff 2008: 73); a contractual agreement between a master-craftsman and a person who wants to learn skills (Deafenbaugh 1989) and a rite of passage that facilitates school-work transitions (Coy 1989). It also refers to a model of learning in the labour market (Fuller & Unwin 2009); and an instrument of the state to control young people, especially; in this period of economic uncertainties (Dolphin & Lanning 2011: 32). Apprenticeship has also different forms including 'training', 'learning-by-doing', 'practicum', and 'internship'. Each of these is used differently depending on the learning contexts. Nonetheless, internship, which is usually equated to unpaid or low paid practice to entry-level job seekers, is the most widespread form of apprenticeship in the contemporary period (Fuller & Unwin 2009: 406). The availability of various forms of apprenticeship practices informed my research to employ the most suitable one that fits with the context of the Ethiopian weaving economy.

Thus, I found the term 'learning-by-doing' more insightful and appropriate phrase than that of other forms of apprenticeships. Because, the process of becoming a weaver involves young peoples' active roles and participation in the creation of value in which they purposefully engage in both learning and doing. In using this term, I argue that children's learning of weaving skills in the urban Gamo society cannot be isolated from 'doing' (see chapter 5). The term 'learning-by-doing' was coined by John Dewey, a progressive educationalist in the late 19$^{th}$ century. It refers to a dialectical process by which, through hands-on experience, young people learn and, at the same time, engage in problem-solving activities in their everyday lives (Reese 2011: 1).

Dewey's analysis is critical of the traditional method of education that depicts children as passive agents whose role is to receive knowledge and skills from their teachers. Instead, learning-by-doing demonstrates children's agency.

### *Agency*

Recognizing children's agency has long been at the core of childhood studies (James & Prout 1997, Woodhead 2009, Tisdall & Punch 2012). Much of the childhood literature emphasizes children's identity and power as social actors and agents of change (Bell & Payne 2009). For instance, Bourdillon et al (2010: 134) explained children's agency in relation to making effective choices regarding their lives. Alanen (2001: 21) associated it with children's power to influence, coordinate, organize and control day-to-day events concerning their life. Agency is also explained in relation to children's everyday meaning-making practices.

The idea of children's agency has, however, stimulated debates among scholars of childhood, child rights and children's geographies (Hanson 2016, Esser et al 2016, Tisdall & Punch 2012, Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi 2016). For instance, Esser et al (2016) argued that children's agency needs to be reconceptualized to explain it from the vantage point of social relations and interdependency. The authors problematize the idea of children as social actors, contending that it does not reflect their personal quality; it rather shows their participation in decentralized practices at different places. Bordonaro & Payne (2012) explain children's agency as 'ambiguous' because it results in behaviour and lifestyles that are not consistent with local morality. Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi (2013), argue on the importance of considering children's perceptions of vulnerability to conceptualize agency. By drawing on cases of migrant workers in Accra, the authors underscore how agency is related to rejecting the normative order of parents/households and societal expectations (ibid: 373). Mistreatment by the hands of (step) parents, older siblings and relatives, tensions in the household, and abject poverty are some of the reasons children give for leaving their households behind and migrating to Accra for work. Thus, vulnerability is an

important reason for children to decide for themselves and to exercise their agency (see also Bolutife & Arts 2018).

Moncrieffe (2009) pointed out the positive and negative forms children's agency. The negative forms are cultivated in contexts of war, violence and perverse forms of socialization whereby children in some contexts serve as child soldiers and perpetrators of violence. The positive forms can be promoted by societal values, attitudes and norms that can positively influence children to function as social, political and economic actors.

In the face of adversity, children's agency is also explained as constrained (Chuta 2014). The notion of constrained agency is also used to explain the limited capacity of people to take actions due to institutional and sociocultural structures of the globalizing world (Coe & Jordhus-Lier 2010). In this same manner, by borrowing the idea of constrained agency, my study explains how particular sociocultural attitudes about female bodies limited girls' involvement in weaving and thereby contributed to the reproduction of the gendered division of labour in the weaving economy (see chapter 6).

In my study, I approach agency from the vantage point of children's competency in their everyday learning-by-doing practices. In this regard, Vanderbeck 2008: (397) stated that little has been said on how agency relates to the mundane domains of responsibility, and in relation to children's competences. Importantly, in the analysis of children's competence, I borrow Jeffrey's (2012) insightful analytical framework of theorizing agency. Jeffrey used agency as a lens with three analytical points: 1) imagining agency in relation to multiple social structures instead of looking at it from a single broader process such as capitalist development, 2) looking at children's capacity of taking actions in a particular place and time as agency varies across different spatial and temporal zones and, 3) imagining agency in relation to the distinctive nature of children as a separate generation. These analytical points are useful for my research insofar as this study emphasizes the centrality of

place to look at the interactions of local and global processes in changing childhoods. Besides, as highlighted in chapter 4, the broader structural processes that shape children's everyday lives are multiple. Furthermore, in my research, I do not intend to study children's everyday material and social practices separately, as if they live alone. Instead, by employing a relational approach and looking at children's social relations (Esser et al 2016), I analyse children's agency focusing on their purposeful engagements in the learning-by-doing processes with adults, using the concept of generation (see chapter 5).

The above section demonstrated and argued my decision to use a sociocultural approach as a component of the analytical framework leading to the use of key concepts of interpretive reproduction and agency. This, in turn, helps to explain the conceptions of childhoods from the local contexts. However, local contexts and global processes are interconnected, influencing each other. The subsequent section elaborates how I analyse childhoods drawing from broader processes of changes and continuities (macro analysis of childhood) using a political economy framework.

### 2.5.2 Political economy approach

A political economy approach provides an analysis of how broader development processes shape childhoods, children's work, livelihoods and productive and reproductive activities. In this research, the broader processes at play include the promotion of the private sector through policies of market expansion and enterprise development, universal policies on education, and global campaigns against child labour (inspired by labour policies introduced by the ILO and other multinational organizations such as UNESCO) encapsulated under the work-free childhoods discourse. Therefore, as part of a macro analysis of childhoods, a political economy analysis is useful to understand the localized experiences of child workers within the context of global processes such as neoliberal capitalism, globalization and modernization, all of which have a far-reaching impact on the weaving economy.

Different political economy approaches are used in many disciplines of the social sciences. In the Marxian conceptual framework, the foundation of a political economy analysis is production, complemented by relations (i.e. social organization) of production. This involves the class-based process of bargaining between labour and capital over the control of economic surplus (Caporaso & Levine 1992: 55). Under capitalism, the surplus value[4] that eventually leads to capital accumulation is 'appropriated'. In relation to children's work, this encompasses the material relations and conditions in which young people contribute to productive work, and are central to age and the spatial division of labour (Robson 2004a).

Political economy is an important analytical approach in childhood studies insofar as it helps to explain the changing patterns of children's everyday lives, drawing on global processes such as neoliberal capitalism, modernity and others (see for e.g., Katz 2001, Hart 2008, Cheney 2007, Aitken et al 2006, Abebe & Bessell 2011). By doing so, political economy is used to explain childhood poverty at the local level (Hart 2008), and the role of children in relation to national government strategy and nationhood as shaped by global discourses of childhood (Cheney 2007). It is also employed to study children's work. Loreta Bass's (2004) work is a good example here. In her book about child labour in sub-Saharan Africa, Bass (2004) explained how political and economic factors like poverty, war, ethnic conflict, bad governance, ineffective legislation, HIV/AIDS, free trade, corruption, debt, and structural adjustment policies have impacted the livelihoods of children in Africa. She reported how these factors reduced children's educational opportunities and expanded work responsibilities at the household level.

Abebe's (2007: 91) study showed the inextricable linkage between children's livelihood strategies within local economies, and national and global economic, social and political structures. Taking child workers as a case in southern Ethiopia, Abebe explains how the coffee price decline in 2006/07 in international markets adversely affected local livelihoods and increased children's work. Likewise, Robson (2004a) revealed how

children's work in rural north Nigeria was central to the functioning of the economy in activities related to production, reproduction, commodity circulation, and marketing. These empirical studies demonstrate how a political economy analysis can be used to explain children's work in relation to larger political-economic and structural processes. In a similar fashion, this current research shows how development strategies by different organizations (including civil society organizations, international development agencies, schools, and local and national government offices) restructure children's productive and reproductive roles, and their participation in weaving activities in Ethiopia. As explained by Frønes (2005), in their daily practices, the work of different organizations, ranging from non-profit agencies to schools, affect both adults' and children's conceptions of childhoods. This is elaborated in chapters 4 and 7, illustrating the interventions by government and non-government organizations working to strengthen the weaving economy while at the same time trying to eliminate child labour from it and describing how this has disrupted children's everyday lives. A political economy analysis is therefore useful to analyse how the workings of different organizations affect children's productive and reproductive roles and thereby restructure the everyday lives of young people.

Furthermore, a political economy analysis helps to explain global and local markets and their influence on childhoods (Bachman 2000). Markets have their own effects on children's work and their livelihoods. For instance, the recall of garments in the US made by child workers in Bangladesh and the removal of these workers from the labour market was reported to have adversely affected the livelihoods of several thousands of child workers and their families in the 1990s (Bourdillion et al 2010). This shows the importance of investigating the changes in international and local markets in order to understand the effects of these on the childhoods of working children.

Apart from this, using political economy is useful to explain the relationships between the formal and informal sectors. Exemplary work

here is by Bachman (2000). She used a political economy analysis to explain the nature of business in the informal and formal sectors which relied on child labour. The author showed that child labour has direct and indirect roles in these business activities. The direct role is when a firm or business enterprise employs child workers. This direct employment is common in the informal sector where children participate in different economic activities and in agricultural work. The indirect role is when goods and services that are produced by children are purchased by formal sector firms, and sold in the domestic and international markets. Another important study by Bhaskaran et al (2011: 7) showed the rise of outsourcing and sub-contracting arrangements of embroidery-making by Delhi garment factories to households that use child workers. The authors showed that the garments produced by children were destined for the international market. Households were found willing to carry out the subcontracted work since their work environment is not regulated. Along the same lines, Williams & Lansky (2013) explained the deepening of informality with the growth of outsourcing and sub-contracting arrangements from formal to informal enterprises where child workers are ubiquitous.

The political economy analysis for this study is informed and inspired by the feminist political economy approach. Scholarship in feminist political economy developed in reaction to the static categorization of class which overlooked women and race, and in an attempt to go beyond the categories of the oppressed-oppressor (Armstrong & Connelly 1989: 5-7). By emphasizing the interrelationships between gender, race and class, a feminist political economy analysis focuses on the politics of everyday lives, and how these are shaped by gendered relationships in households, markets, and by state and non-state actors (Luxton & Bezanson 2006). Apart from gender and race, the key analytical lenses include power and the division of labour. Importantly, these concepts are encapsulated within social reproduction which is a key analytical concept in feminist political economy (see the discussion below). Feminist political economists thus attempt to reconceptualize class by

including a gender lens as a way of transforming women's lives through recognition and valuation of their work (Armstrong & Connelly 1989).

However, this research recognizes that a feminist political economy approach is a critique of male-centred political economy that is also adult-centric. As such, children are not the centre of analysis in the feminist political economy literature. This does not mean that feminist political economy has no analytical merits in studying children's work. Rather, it is a useful approach to explain children's everyday lives by employing gender, ethnicity, division of labour, and everyday lives. While feminist scholars apply a political economy analysis to explain women's productive and reproductive roles and the underlying gender relations (Bass 2004), this study borrows the analytical concepts to explain working children's productive and reproductive roles in different historical periods.

In using a political economy approach, this research will first explain historical developments in relation to the urban weaving economy and Gamo weavers (see chapter 4). History plays an important role in political economy analysis since it helps to understand when and how children started working in the weaving sector, and their continued involvement across different political and economic periods. In this respect, the analytical questions include, how, why and when the Gamo people started using children's labour in the weaving activities. This gives an insight into local concepts of childhood and how they are (re)shaped through time due to the changing spatial, historical, political and economic processes that have a direct or indirect effect on the urban weaving economy. It also helps to understand the changing dynamics of children's time-use (see chapter 7) as well as their social reproductive roles (see chapter 6).

Importantly, a key concept that feminist scholars utilize in their political economy analysis is social reproduction. As discussed below, social reproduction is a useful but under-researched topic in childhood studies (Katz 2001). For feminist political economists, women are the

centre of analysis as a social category; whilst for this study; working children are at the heart of its social reproduction analysis.

### *Social reproduction as a component of feminist political economy*

In childhood studies, social reproduction is an important but inadequately explained concept (Katz 1994, 2001, Abebe & Kjørholt 2009). In most cases, research on children's work emphasizes the challenges work poses to schooling rather than the day-to-day contributions of children's material practices and their social reproductive roles.

Willis (1981:48) already indicated long ago that one key problem in utilizing the concept of social reproduction is that it refers to many things including everyday biological reproduction, the creation of gendered persons, the generational replacement of labour, and continued capitalist accumulation - along with the persistence of particular relations of production. For feminists, social reproduction refers to the activities, behaviours, responsibilities and attitudes that are directly related to the maintenance of everyday lives and to the reproduction of a gendered division of labour across generations (Laslett & Brenner 1989: 382). This includes, among other things, how food, shelter, and clothing are made available, how children are raised and socialized, how the elderly are cared for, and aspects of sexuality. O'Brien et al (2005) explained how social provisioning by governments and the private sector, for example the expansion of childcare services, reduced women's domestic work and shifted parenting roles in the Global North. In demographic studies, social reproduction signals the social nature of procreation or population processes in particular, and fertility matters in general (Laslett & Brenner 1989). In Marxian interpretation, social reproduction refers to the perpetuation of structures of class inequality and particular modes of production (Marx 1976 [1867]: 274). Bourdieu's interpretation expanded the concept of social reproduction, combining education, family life and social class together, and emphasizing the practices of transmission of the cultural capital[5] of parents through some form of education (Goldthorpe 2007: 24, Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 11, Bourdieu 2002).

This research aims to explain everyday practices that maintain and reinforce relations of production and reproduction of the labour force in the weaving economy (in its structural form). In this regard, I found Cindi Katz's interpretation of social reproduction, which combines Marxian and Bourdieu's explanations, to be an appropriate analytical lens. Cindi Katz defined social reproduction as follows:

> Social reproduction encompasses a broad range of practices and social relations that maintain and reproduce particular relations of production along with the material social grounds in which they take place. It further involves the reproduction of the population and the means by which people produce their subsistence. Moreover, it includes daily and long-term reproduction, both of the means of production and the labour-power to make them work (Katz 2001: 711).

Furthermore, Katz explained social reproduction in conjunction with three interrelated dimensions: political-economic, political-ecological, and cultural. Firstly, the political-economic aspect encompasses an analysis of the reproduction of knowledge and skills with everyday practices that maintain and reinforce class relations (also relations of other categories of differences) including learning practices which reproduce dominant relations of production and labour-power (ibid: 712). Thus, the political-economic aspect of analysis involves two components – learning processes, and relations of production. In my research, the learning processes of cultural practices (weaving and other gendered activities) are elaborated in chapter 5, and the relations of production that arise out of the skills differences of various groups of workers are analysed in chapter 6. In this light, as part of explaining social reproductive patterns, analysing working children's labour-power is an important aspect (Katz 2001, Luxton & Bezanson 2006: 4). In examining the labour-power of women, feminist political economists followed a relational approach to explore dimensions of social reproduction and capital accumulation (Luxton & Bezanson 2006). This means looking at women's relationships within households, the labour market, the state, and communities, and their negotiations in the gendered division of labour and capital accumulation. Likewise, in the

analysis of how labour-power is reproduced, this research looks at learning practices in the households and how these practices are affected by broader processes such as spatial clustering, measures to universalize education, and anti-child labour programmes. In particular, in chapters 4 and 6, my research provides an analysis of how clustering and workplace production that aim to bring about relative surplus value are affecting working children either through circumventing their participation in weaving activities or increasing their participation through the deepening of informality that subsequently leads to increased sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements. Nonetheless, in approaching surplus value, this research does not focus on the Marxian analysis that emphasizes social differentiation based on ownership of capital and accumulation through labour exploitation in class terms. Instead, as explained below, it focuses on a differentiation based on both economic (on the basis of skill levels) and non-economic factors (age, gender, generation), that go beyond the Marxian interpretation of class relations.

Secondly, the political-ecological aspect emphasizes development practices and interventions that have brought about environmental changes, affecting people's livelihoods and relations of production (Katz 2001: 714). This is explained in light of the expansion of capitalist development in different geographic locations, the subsequent environmental changes in particular localities, the disruption of peoples' relations with nature, and the corresponding changing patterns of livelihoods (Katz 2004). Much politico-ecological research emphasizes environmental changes in rural settings. In this research, however, the politico-ecological aspect focuses on changes in physical workplaces (i.e. from home-based workplaces to factories) due to the social production of places (spatiality) for the sake of development.

Thirdly, the boundaries of the cultural aspect of social reproduction are blurred by the political-economic aspect explained above. The cultural aspect constitutes the reproduction of cultural practices through some form of learning whereby becoming a member of a particular social group is attained through knowledge and skills acquisition (Katz

2001: 714). Thus, as elaborated in chapter 5, the cultural aspect of reproduction involves acquiring and sharing the values and knowledge of a particular social group to which one belongs - either through birth or by choice.

In analysing social reproduction, both productive and reproductive activities are explained on the basis of key analytical categories such as age, gender, race and type of work, either paid or unpaid (Luxton & Bezanson 2006). Heissler & Porter (2013) reported that the productive and reproductive roles of children in Ethiopia are mainly driven by intergenerational interdependence. This is important for the functioning of household economies. However, household economies are influenced by the age, gender, class and educational status of children as well as other intra-household factors such as negotiations, birth order, household size, and composition (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009, Heissler & Porter 2013). These variables are useful for the social reproduction analysis of this research. Furthermore, by following the work of Cindi Katz (2004: 18-22), this research analyses reproductive activities as a way of explaining children's social reproductive roles and showing childhoods in a larger perspective. This is important as the research focuses on the everyday practices of child workers of both sexes. Besides, examining reproductive activities is essential since it helps to analyse the gendered division of labour, and the material and social relations of children when age, gender and work intersect (Robson 2004b). Importantly, by utilizing these important variables, a social reproduction analysis offers an insight into social stratification.

### *Linking social reproduction and stratification*

Various systems of stratification operate across different societies based on class, ethnic group, occupation, gender, age and generation (Saunders 2006: 3). A key scholar who worked on social stratification and whose mode of stratification has analytical merit for this study is Max Weber. Weber used the term 'mode of stratification' to explain multiple forms of social class[6] and strata, including occupational status groups (Weber 1968: 306). Weber argued that Marxian stratification of class is too

broad, showing only dualistic relations on the basis of ownership of the means of production. Likewise, and building on Weber, Stolzman & Gamberg (1973: 111) critiqued Marxian analysis of class-based stratification, as it goes far beyond an analysis of social relations in a specific sector, focusing on a more macroscopic explanation of the social structure in its totality, based on his concept of exploitation in production relations of labour-capital. Although it has its own analytical merits, a key limitation of Marxian political economy is that it overlooks non-economic factors that contribute to class formation within the society such as gender and generational relations. In contrast, a Weberian mode of stratification takes into account other classificatory variables, going beyond a one-dimensional view based on economic class and material relations: it employs a multi-dimensional approach, embracing both non-economic and economic factors (Panday 1983: 172). Viewed through this lens, the interest of this research in applying a political economy approach goes beyond the Marxian class analysis. This is because, in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia, examining childhoods and children's work is not limited to the politics of ownership of the means of production and the nexus between labour and capital. Rather, it includes, among other things, relational dimensions based on gender, generation, age, and the different skill levels among various groups of workers (see chapter 6). Importantly, this research does not view working children as having a constant position in a particular social group. Rather, it considers and appreciates their progress to another skills level with increased competency, and the development of their labour-power through practice. This is foundational in a social reproduction analysis in which childhood is understood from a life-course perspective. Hillmert (2013) highlighted the link between social reproduction and stratification to understand the life-phase transitions across generations. Hillmert noted:

> The intention of a social reproduction approach is to examine how children with certain levels of attainment are 'generated' from one generation to another (Hillmert 2013: 137).

This involves, as explained below, engaging in relational and generational analyses which are useful to understanding childhood in relation to a particular generational location, and transitions from one life-phase to the other. Therefore, a relational and generational analysis is accomplished by investigating working children's relationships among themselves and with adults. However, a close examination of the concept of generation shows that various authors have used it in many contradictory ways (Kertzer 1983, Hart 2016: 41). Consequently, a careful scrutiny is required to understand the different meanings, in order to choose the appropriate interpretation that serves the analytical interests of this research.

### *Generations*

Different authors interpreted generation as a 'historical period', 'cohorts growing up together', 'kinship descent' and a 'life-phase' (Kertzer 1983: 126). The first two interpretations – historical period and cohorts - refer to people who live in a particular time, with shared experiences and identities and particular political subjectivities (Huijsmans 2016: 17). In particular, generation as a cohort is typically used to refer to age groups which are born during a single year, to a decade or even more (Hart 2016: 41). Generation as a historical period mainly refers to Mannheim's interpretation of various cohorts of people who share the same historical event (Mannheim 1952: 304, Kertzer 1983: 133). Historical generations also include those young people who come of age with 'fresh contact' to a particular historical incident such as the 9/11 attack or the Cold War. In kinship descent, generation refers to parent-child and sibling relations (Kertzer 1983: 135). This interpretation is employed to explain socialization and acculturation practices in family settings, mobility, and the immigration of kinship descendants (ibid: 135). Generation as a life stage, conversely, is associated with the idea of transition from one life-phase to the other (Huijsmans 2016: 11). In many instances, life-phase is related to common phrases such as 'youth', 'middle age', and 'post retirement' (Hart 2016: 42).

Importantly, from the various interpretations of generation, life-phase and kinship descent serve the analytical interests of this research. This is because generation, in its kinship-based interpretation, helps to explain adult-child relations, including the parental and fictive kinship arrangements important among the Gamo people living in the countryside and in Addis Ababa when learning how to weave (see chapter 5). In this analysis, interdependence among children and adults in the co-production of value, and in intra-household bargaining and negotiations are also discussed. With regards to generation as a life-phase, this is a particularly useful analytical gaze to explain the different skills strata in the urban weaving economy and how particular periods across the life-course are key to becoming someone, including developing greater skills in weaving (see chapter 6). Life-phase also involves a transition from one skill stratum to another. However, the idea of generation as a life-phase overlaps with the notion of social age which is explained below (Huijsmans 2016: 23). Yet, the two are set apart because life-phase captures the larger life-course framework. Furthermore, life-phase is employed here to analyse the aspirations of young people and adults in relation to future life and transitions (see chapter 7), and young people's consumption cultures as peer groups (see chapter 8).

Generational relations between children and adults are often associated with power. For scholars like Qvortrup (1994), Beazley et al (2009), Mayall (2012: 349), adults are more powerful in constructing meanings to child and childhoods. Childhood, in this view, is seen as a social status representing intergenerational dualistic relations. Qvortrup (1994) characterized child-adult relations by asymmetrical power relationships whereby children possess a subordinated position in relation to adults. Mayall (2012) pointed out that children are not autonomous enough to make important decisions. Consequently, adults are more dominant than children in various social institutions[7] such as family and schools. For Mayall, the main intent behind the formulation

of the UNCRC was to protect children from different forms of exploitation perpetrated by adults.

Hopkins & Pain (2007: 288) labelled the generational relations between children and adults 'intergenerationality'. This encompasses aspects of the social identity that individuals or groups, including children, possess, based on generational sameness or difference. Jans (2004) underscored that generational relationships between children, youth and adults have become increasingly complex and ambivalent due to the varying interests of these different groups. While parents attempt to protect children and cherish them, children, in contrast, are more inspired to present themselves as independent individuals. Therefore, it is not clear whether children can be granted the same rights and responsibilities as adults or not.

Ansell (2014) pointed out that the processes of neoliberal modernization that aim to transform societies are profoundly structured by age and generational relations. These relations, as appropriated in 'generational order' by Alanen (2005: 289), refer to relational processes in which some individuals are constructed as 'children' and some others as 'adults'. These constructions have consequences for the type of activities each category undertakes, on their identities, and on their interrelationships. However, generational relationships between children and adults outside familial relations are under-researched and have received less attention from social scientists (Vanderbeck 2007). Baker & Hinton (2001: 189), in their study of carpet factory workers in Nepal, reported that generational issues are rarely considered in development programmes that target changing working children's lives. Ansell (2014) stressed the importance of looking at generational relationships to understand larger processes of change such as globalization and how these changes shape childhood. White (2012: 81) emphasized the relevance of including other dimensions of social differentiation such as age, gender, ethnicity and class in studying generational relations of childhood. Moreover, Huijsmans et al (2014) and Huijsmans (2016)

highlighted that in examining generational relations, it is relevant to critically engage with the concept of age.

### *Age*

Like generation, age is also interpreted in different ways, including chronological and social age. In many instances, chronological age is embodied in legal definitions of child (Reynaert et al 2009). The internationally and legally persuasive definition of a child is pronounced by the UNCRC. This definition is based on chronologically determined age, in which those human beings below the age of 18 are considered to be children (1989: Article 1). With almost near universalization (the exception is USA), the UNCRC is the most widely accepted international legislative instrument by governments in the world (Arts 2016, Reynaert et al 2009). State parties have also harmonized their domestic laws with the under-18 definition of a child, sometimes as a condition of development assistance (Clark-Kazak 2009: 1308). Those states that ratified the UNCRC are required to safeguard children from any type of inhuman treatments and abuses. They are also obliged to promote the fulfilment of the basic rights of the child including health and education. In many instances, the UNCRC age-based categorization of children and adults is used in statistical data in which children are presented as a separate age group. In particular, this is the case in demographic studies that reveal fertility, mortality and migration data (McKendrick 2001).

Nonetheless, ethnographic studies indicate that understandings of childhood and youth, and the perceptions regarding the socially accepted roles of children, vary across time, space and culture (Clark-Kazak 2009). As such, chronological definitions of age overlook the socially constructed understandings of childhood and youth (ibid: 1309). Thus, the term 'social age' is developed to refer to socially constructed meanings in relation to physical development and the roles given to children, adults and elders in different places (ibid: 1310). In the case of my research, social age is linked to children reaching the appropriate height to engage in weaving practices and the expectations on them to undertake certain tasks (see chapter 5). However, age cannot be isolated

from agency in both its chronological or social forms. As Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi (2016: 307) noted, 'age' exists in 'age-ncy' and agency in age, insofar as both are manifested in relational terms across the life-course to fulfil societal expectations. This is mainly evident in many African societies where children 'act' according to their social position and in relation to who is the youngest and the eldest within the household or community.

## 2.6 Conclusions: Towards the everyday politics of learning-by-doing

The above sections highlighted how this study integrates the binary categories of local and global childhoods, and thereby provide a holistic picture of children's work in the weaving economy in urban Ethiopia. To this end, the chapter discussed the importance and limitations of different concepts, and argued the relevance of using an integrated analytical framework with different concepts, rather than just a single one. In developing an integrated analytical framework referred to as *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing*, this chapter followed a multidisciplinary perspective, drawing on useful literature from a range of disciplines in the social sciences including childhood and youth studies, sociology, human geography, feminist studies, political economy, and educational psychology. Importantly, using the relational concept of place as a lens, the framework developed here embraces both microscopic (socially constructed) and macroscopic (social structural) orientations of childhoods.

This framework is insightful insofar as it helps to uncover the multiple childhood experiences of the same group of children (working Gamo children) in particular localities. The framework constitutes a political economy approach with social reproduction and some other useful concepts, integrated with a sociocultural approach with the concepts of interpretive reproduction and agency. By doing so, the chapter argued that both local and global processes that shape childhoods can be studied together. Besides serving as a launching pad in

the analysis of the empirical materials, *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing* guides the next chapter, which looks at methodological issues in research on childhoods and children's work.

## Notes

[1] Labour-power refers to "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value (a commodity) of any description" (Marx 1976 [1867]: 117). Furthermore, labour-power appears in the market as a commodity, in which the possessor (in this research, it refers to child workers) offers it for sale, or sells it, as a commodity (ibid: 117). Labour-power also includes unpaid work, which is referred to as 'surplus product' (ibid: 20).

[2] There are many interpretations of constructivism in the social sciences (Cunninghum & Duffy 1996: 2). This research emphasizes an educational theory developed by Jean Piaget to explain how children learn and acquire knowledge. In Piagetian analysis, development is a linear process that happens through progress to different stages. In this process, childhood learning is individualized and initially happens in the mind of a child (John-Steiner & Mahn 1996).

[3] In using the concept of MKOs, Vygotsky stressed on the variation of knowledge and skills children develop with and without the support of others (Verenikina 2003: 10). He then referred to the distance between the child's actual developmental level attained through independent learning and under the guidance of MKOs (adults or more capable peers) as Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978: 86). Thus, the concept of ZPD emphasizes relationships between learning and development. Nonetheless, as the intent in this research is not to compare children's levels of skill development with or without the guidance of others, the concept of ZPD has little analytical relevance and, consequently, is not utilized.

[4] Surplus value refers to the value of the product produced by labour, above the actual price of labour as paid out in wages, which will eventually lead to capital accumulation. It can be explained in absolute and relative terms. The surplus value produced by prolongation of the working day is referred as 'absolute surplus value' (Marx 1976 [1867]: 217). 'Relative surplus value' denotes the surplus value created by increased productivity through transforming traditional production processes into modern ones. This reduces the labour-time needed to produce the goods and services necessary for the reproduction of labour-power.

[5] Cultural capital, which is Bourdieu's signature concept, is capital 'embodied' in individual dispositions and competencies that give privileged access to such

capital in its 'objectified' form of cultural artefacts, and that is in turn institutionalized in criteria of cultural, including academic, evaluation and thus ultimately in educational qualifications that also provide returns to their holders (Goldthorpe 2007: 4). According to Bourdieu, the education system primarily reproduces the structure of distribution of cultural capital among different social classes. As such, the culture that education transmits is closer to the dominant culture and the mode of inculcation practiced by the family. Consequently, by putting implicit pedagogic action into practice, the education system reproduces the dominant culture. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 30).

[6] In Weberian analysis, there are different forms of social class such as the working class, the propertyless intelligentsia, specialist groups or different technicians, and education and property-based classes (Weber 1968: 302-307).

[7] In defining institutions, this research follows Douglass North (1991) who defined them as "humanly devised constraints including formal (constitutions, laws, property rights) and informal rules (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct) that structure social, political and economic interactions" (p: 97).

# 3 Methodological issues in researching children's work

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology applied in my research. It explains about the study site, the fieldwork processes, the data collection, and analysis techniques. It also highlights my positionality, ethical issues, and limitations. Importantly, the main research question and the analytical framework presented in the previous chapters inform and guide this methodology chapter. To recall, the main research question reads: how do the local sociocultural understandings of childhood and work interact with the broader political-economic processes in changing childhoods and children's involvement in different activities in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia? This question serves two analytical interests – local (micro) and the broader (macro) childhoods. As the analytical framework developed in the previous chapter integrated these two approaches, the methodological traditions followed in each of the approaches influences this research.

In methodological terms, a micro-childhood analysis is mainly drawn from empirical materials that focus on the social and cultural contexts where children live, in order to shed light on the diversity of childhoods across different places and times (Alanen 2014: 135, Leonard 2016, James et al 1998). Therefore, many of such studies follow a qualitative research approach with ethnographic methods as a standard methodology (James & Prout 1997: 4). In these studies, childhood is explained from an agency perspective, and children are seen as social actors and agents of change (e.g., Christensen & James 2008). Furthermore, research in this approach constitutes small–scale studies

that focus on children's everyday lives and their relations with other actors in their immediate environment (Alanen 2014: 135). In these studies, children are taken as the units of analysis (ibid). A critique on micro- childhood methodological approaches is about overemphasizing childhood diversities and children's agency at the local level and the studies being conspicuously distant from structural factors that shape childhoods (Leonard 2016). Consequently, general knowledge and inferences about the social, political and economic realms of children come from 'childhood-alien' topics (Qvortrup 2000: 78). In my research, for instance, I have mainly drawn the historical analysis on Ethiopian childhoods from materials that focus on politics, law and societies that say little about children.

With regards to the methodological traditions of a macro-childhood analysis, much empirical material is drawn from historical data, demographic studies and surveys to reveal the commonalities in childhoods (Qvortrup 2014). In this analysis, childhood is usually explained from a structural perspective. Mostly, society is seen as the level of analysis and childhood as the unit of analysis (ibid: 674). These two analytical elements are explained within a political economy framework with societal changes seen as 'explanatory instances' and the subsequent changes in childhoods as the 'phenomena' (Qvortrup 2000: 79). Explanatory instances refer to broader social and cultural changes such as a shift in the mode of production. Historical periods and particular regions or countries can also serve as instances for a comparative analysis between cases (ibid: 85). The phenomenon, however, is associated with a subsequent change in children's everyday lives - as a result of explanatory instances. This means that a macro-childhood analysis requires the employment of a dialectical approach to explain how broader policies and programmes (explanatory instances) (re)structure developments in childhoods (the phenomenon). Empirical observations, such as the changing patterns of children's time-use, and their experience of exclusion or poverty, are linked to a macro-childhoods analysis (Alanen 2014: 136). However, a key limitation of

these types of studies is that by emphasising structural processes, they overlook children's perspectives and neglect their agency (Alanen 2014: 136).

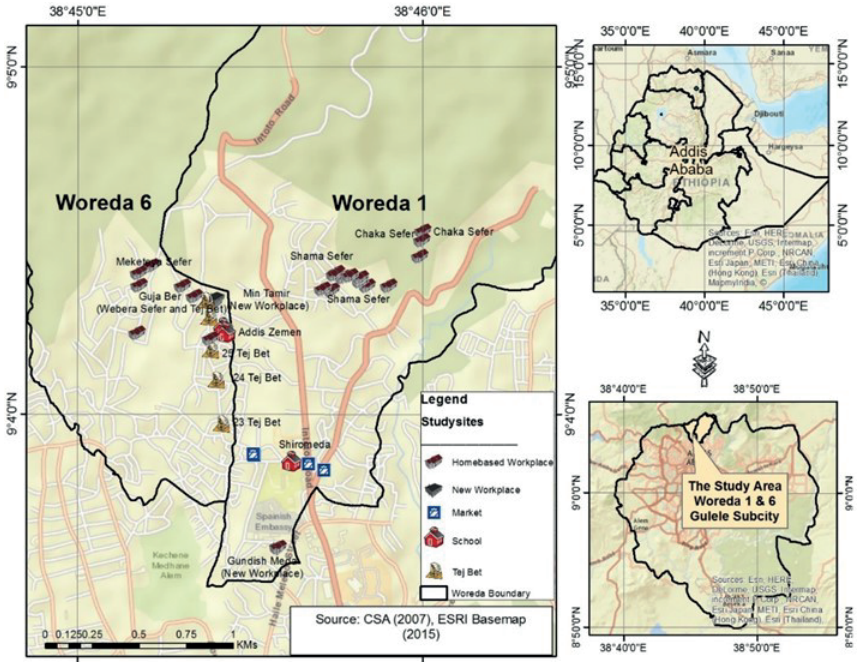
This study appreciates the methodological strengths of both micro- and macro-childhood analysis. However, in an attempt to benefit from the methodological merits of these two modes of analysis, this study follows a rather pragmatic approach. In so doing, it sees children as social actors and agents of change. As such, the study underscores the usefulness of children's perspectives in generating empirical data. Meanwhile, it does not want to ignore the impacts of broader political-economic processes on children's everyday lives. Consequently, a mixed research approach is followed. This means that both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, analysed and integrated (Morse 2010: 484-48, Creswell & Clark 2007, Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). The qualitative data, which was mainly collected through ethnographic methods and historical analysis, is used as the main source of data as such data is found to be more insightful in providing a deeper understanding of children's work and their everyday lives. Conversely, the quantitative data, which was collected through a school survey, provided a more generalized picture of children's work. The survey findings are therefore used to supplement the qualitative data. Such methodological pluralism is essential to generate rich accounts of data (Berg 2001: 6), and provides a basis for triangulating the data derived from different sources (Denzin 1970). As such, mixing methods helps to complement, compare and contrast the findings, and thereby addresses the shortcomings of different methods.

## 3.2 The study site

This research was conducted in urban Ethiopia, in a specific locality of Addis Ababa called Gulele sub-city. This sub-city was chosen due to the relatively high concentration of clusters of weavers. One report showed that about 60% of weaving enterprises in Addis Ababa are concentrated in this area (Alemayehu 2006: 4). In particular, in Gulebe sub-city

localities such as Woreda 01 and 06, the livelihoods of the majority of households are based on weaving (Gulele sub-city 2014). For this reason, the fieldwork was mainly conducted in these two Woredas in specific places such as villages, streets, *tej bets*[1] (local liquor houses), neighbourhood playgrounds, schools, households, and factories (see the map below). I also visited and spent considerable time in the local tea rooms and youth centres where children and young people spend their times playing various indoor games such as table tennis, pool, and watching European Premier League football matches.

*Map 3.1: Location map of the research site and specific fieldwork places*




*Source:* GPS data collected by the author and map redrawn by a geographer[2]

The places on the map above were either child or adult-dominated, or common spaces for both groups. Those common spaces include home-based workplaces (households), streets and schools where both children and adults spent times although the schools (primary and secondary) were mainly child-dominated. Spaces such as *tej bets*, the

market places and factories were mainly adult-dominated places. In the research site there were several local *tej bets* where several men and a few women spent their leisure time. One man (age 46) revealed that in 2016 the main street in Woreda 06 alone had about 13 *tej bets*. Although these *tej bets* were adult-dominated, in some cases I observed children (both boys and girls) as young as eight selling boiled eggs, peanuts, *kollo* (roasted barley with chickpeas), and lottery tickets. In the market place as well, I observed several children and young people of various ages and genders performing activities such as shoe shining, and selling fabrics, lottery tickets and other products. In the newly constructed factories, due to the 'politics of age' (see chapter 4), children's participation in different activities was limited, making these workplaces adult-dominated.

The child-dominated places include the village playgrounds, youth centres, green spaces and nature that were all present in the research site. However, I observed considerable gender variations in the way boys and girls accessed these places (see chapter 8). Furthermore, as illustrated in the map above, most of the northern part of the research site was covered by trees, open fields and grasses that served as important childhood places. In these places, I observed and interviewed several children and young people (boys and girls) who spent their time either playing or working. In particular, as 70% of the households supplemented their income selling firewood and leaves (Mirkuzie 2014: 3), many young people and adults, and especially girls and women, spent time collecting firewood. The following sections elaborate and reflect on the different research methods pursued during fieldwork.

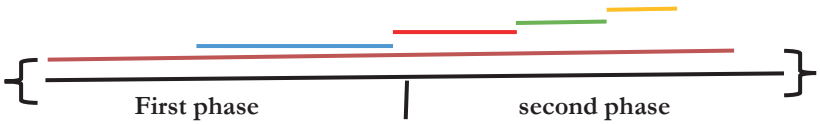
## 3.3 Fieldwork strategy and methods

As explained above, as part of following a mixed methods approach, I used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data during two fieldwork phases. The first phase took five months (Oct 2015-Feb 2016). During this phase, I spent much time on developing rapport, situating

myself in the research site, and learning how to weave from five male child weavers (explained below). I employed specific research methods such as observations (participant and non-participant), and informal interviews during this phase. I continued to hold such informal interviews and make observations throughout the whole fieldwork period in order to maintain my relations and not lose my hard-won access. Aside from this, I conducted a few key informant interviews with local level government (Woreda) and NGO officials in order to gain a general understanding of the research site, the weaving economy and the discourses surrounding child labour.

During the second fieldwork phase, that took seven months (Mar-Oct 2016), I attempted to go deeper into the specific aspects of children's work, and address the more concrete research questions. Thus, I collected data using a school survey and by conducting semi-structured interviews with child and adult weavers and government officials from sub-city to federal levels. Historical data was collected through in-depth interviews with elderly males, and via a review of historical and anthropological materials and other secondary sources of data. I also tried auto-photography with eight child weavers (seven boys and a girl). This did not work out as planned however, because those child weavers who showed willingness to participate were too busy to engage in this time-consuming exercise. In spite of this, the auto-photography process gave an important finding; namely it revealed that child weavers experience time poverty when combining school with work (see chapter 7).

*Figure 3.1: Fieldwork phases and data collection methods*




Only school-going children participated in the school survey (see below for details), while both children and adults of different genders and ages were included in the qualitative study. Purposeful and snowball sampling techniques were applied to select the qualitative research participants based on particular characteristics/features such as age, gender, occupation, educational background, place and time (Berg 2001). These features were found suitable for the research purpose.

Policy makers and researchers in many disciplines such as developmental psychology, social work and economics always use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) definition of a child based on chronological age as a benchmark for policy making and service provision (1989: Article 1). Nonetheless, a definition of children based on chronological age conflates two groups – children and young people. In particular, previous research reported that some Ethiopian parents and community leaders did not consider those persons above the age of 14 as children (Tekola et al 2009: 75) Another study showed that many children in Ethiopia did not know their exact age (Abebe 2008a: 274). For this reason, the terms children and young people are interchangeably used here to refer to persons below the age of 18. I particularly used chronological age instead of social age as a criterion for the selection of participants because it serves as a

structuring factor in social policy terms, and in the way schooling and other services are organized (Clark-Kazak 2009, Huijsmans 2016). Furthermore, chronological age is used in the analysis of data insofar as it helps to better understand the complexities associated with age-based and generational dimensions of childhood.

Although child workers in the weaving economy form the primary analytical interest of this study, the desire to look at intergenerational dynamics, and to capture the processes of changes and continuities across different times, required the involvement of adults in the research. Adult weavers (of both sexes) were thus approached in order to understand their childhood experiences in relation to their work in the weaving economy. Furthermore, representatives of concerned government offices and NGOs participated in this research. Their work experiences on issues of child labour, enterprise development and education were considered in the selection of these participants. An inclusion of different groups of people was an opportunity for a detailed exploration of the experiences, behaviours, and roles of the participant groups and the dynamics of relations, negotiations and frictions among them. As explained below, the qualitative materials were mainly collected by following ethnographic methods.

## 3.4 Ethnography in researching children's work

For different researchers, ethnography can mean different things such as fieldwork, participant observation, method, methodology, and orientation (O'Reilly 2012: 2-5, Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, 2007, Fetterman 2010). It is thus important to explain how ethnography is understood and applied in this research. My study follows Willis & Trondman (2000: 5) who refer to ethnography as a research methodology that draws on a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, including the processes of writing up human experiences. In my research, ethnographic fieldwork mainly involved informal ways of approaching research participants with

unstructured dialogues, participant and non-participant observations, as well as more formal qualitative interview techniques using interview guides (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983: 2, Wolcott 1990). In studies of childhood and informality, ethnography has long been a standard methodology because it provides situated and contextualized data in relation to peoples' everyday lives and social interactions. In studies on informality, researchers found ethnographic methods useful as a way to navigate through different work arrangements to explain the complexities and hidden dynamics of the informal economy (see for e.g., Hart 1973).

In childhood studies, ethnography is a widely accepted methodology as it helps to delve into children's life-worlds and understand their perspectives (James et al 1998, Woodhead 2009: 9, James & James 2001: 10, Punch 2002: 322). James & Prout (1997) noted:

> Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research (p: 8).

As my study looks at the largely informal nature of the weaving economy and childhoods, I chose ethnography over other qualitative methodologies. However, in using ethnography, this study was neither objective nor subjective. It is rather interpretive in the sense of providing interpretation of meanings, relationships, functions, human actions and institutional practices (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 3).

One of the most important issues in ethnographic studies is gaining access. This involves how the researcher approaches the researched and wins trust. Gaining access is most acute during the initial stage of the research setting but continues throughout the various stages of data collection (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 41). When trying to gain access, the researcher needs to have conversations with many people in order to develop rapport (Feldman et al 2003). As such, when negotiating to gain access, the pre-fieldwork plans may not necessarily work as the researcher enters into the field setting (Wolcott 1990). This

was the case in my research as I explain below. In research with children in particular, I found that securing access is a messy process because of the influence of adults and guardians. For me, access was even more complicated by the fact that children's work has been problematized by campaigns against child labour, and because of possible legal repercussions[3] on adults who hire child weavers.

Christensen (2004: 166) explained that one of the strategies to gain access in research with children is situatedness in existing networks. For this, I needed an understanding of the nature of social relationships and networks in the research site. Consequently, I started my fieldwork by working closely with gate keepers and research assistants. Initially, through recommendations[4] by NGO and a local government official, I contacted four adults (three men and a woman) who worked as community workers on child protection projects and enterprise development programmes in the weaving economy. Later on, I decided to work with just two of them (male and female) because they were both from the Gamo ethnic group who know the language, and also came from a weaving family. However, the female assistant soon stopped being involved due to her other work responsibilities. Thus I ended up working with one male research assistant called Demissie (age 46), a brilliant man with a rich life experience as a weaver and as a community worker in various development programmes in the locality. During the field visit, Demissie was an ex-weaver and an ex-community worker on an anti-child labour project[5] in Addis Ababa. Importantly, as explained below, Demissie's positionality had its own effects on the process of knowledge production.

After about two months of fieldwork with Demissie, I had to navigate the fieldwork site by myself. Sometimes, the boys whom I got to know during the data collection process assisted my fieldwork and facilitated access. Importantly, as explained below, due to the gendered positionality of the research assistants, I found it easier to gain access when I navigated the research site, the schools, villages and children's playgrounds myself. Visiting different places and engaging in informal

conversations with different groups of people enabled me to gain a generalized understanding of the research site. Likewise, the repeated visits helped greatly, as I could more easily and frequently talk to different people regarding their life and work. From time to time, I felt my invisibility as many children and adults took my presence as normal and shared their experiences without reservations.

Although field visits and informal conversations greatly helped to generate a thick description of local peoples' everyday lives, these methods had their own shortcomings. Primarily, informal dialogues could not offer an answer to the more concrete and specific questions pertaining to children's work. In particular, with the presence of adult gatekeepers such as parents and guardians, I usually felt uncomfortable asking children some specific questions pertaining to their work (Christensen & James 2008). For example, to ask about remuneration for their work in the presence of adults was a sensitive issue. These even brought potential harm to adult-child relations. I therefore asked those questions which needed to be dealt with in the absence of adults during separate interviews. In all cases, I introduced myself as a researcher who is interested in knowing about the weaving economy and the changes across time – a key strategy that I applied to avoid the rather tricky problem of the sensitivity of child labour issues. I was also cautious not to ask direct questions about child labour problems in order not to jeopardize access or to dictate the flow of the discourse.

One key shortcoming of household visits was that in most cases, children were not available as they spent a considerable amount of their time in schools settings. This made my preliminary encounters in the first two months of fieldwork more adult-centred. Consequently, in order to have more contact with working children, I started going to schools. This was not, however, a component of the pre-fieldwork plan.

In doing research with children, I was aware that they possess different competencies in explaining their everyday practices (James et al 1998: 188). I thus found it useful to utilize different research methods to

enable them to express their views. By following Punch (2002: 337), I applied both traditional and participatory methods. This involved using observations and interviews, learning how to weave from children, and school surveys and semi-structured interviews. In combining these methods, my purpose was to enhance children's participation in expressing their views, reduce my power as a male adult researcher, and thereby delve into children's life-worlds.

### 3.4.1 Positionality

In ethnographic research, positionality is where the researcher stands in relation to the researched based on some key factors such as age, gender, race, cultural identity, and education (Merriam et al 2001: 411). These factors matter in shaping the process of knowledge production. In particular, I found that gender, age and educational status profoundly influenced the research process.

Gender identity is one of the issues that affects knowledge production (Rose 1997). In this research, my identity as a male researcher was a challenge for research with female participants. This was particularly so when I attempted to understand why weaving is a male-dominated occupation in urban Gamo society (see chapter 6). From semi-structured interviews with a female participant, I found out that one reason for women to disengage from weaving is related to attitudes towards menstruation. However, it took me several months to figure out any possible relationship between these young women's bodily experience and weaving until my interview with a girl named Marta (age 17). Although I had had in-depth interviews with four female weavers before Marta, none of them mentioned menstruation. I also never asked or thought about it in any way. In my informal conversations with over a hundred people, including several women, the issue of menstruation was never discussed. Consequently, the interview with Marta signalled the importance to engage with it. In subsequent interviews with seven females (ages 14-18), I asked whether menstruation affects weaving. While three of the young women disclosed that it indeed affects their

involvement in weaving (see chapter 6), the rest said that there was no relationship between mensuration and weaving. To speak about menstruation to a male researcher was quite difficult for the female participants. In one interview, for instance, a female weaver (age 16) said weaving makes her feel discomfort sometimes. When I asked how, she said whenever she feels pain in the stomach. As she said this she turned her face and looked shy. I then asked if the stomach-ache was related to menstruation. The girl quickly said yes. It was clear that she did not really want to speak about it and I had to change the subject (interview notes, Addis Ababa: 14-09-2016). Such an experience made it clear that in studying young people, the researcher needs to be aware of sociocultural beliefs and gendered issues pertaining to bodily experiences – something which I initially overlooked because of my gender identity. This experience allowed me to look into how gender positionality shapes ones' closeness in understanding the subjective experiences of the other gender, and thereby affecting knowledge production.

Another important aspect of positionality is related to age. My identity as a young adult had clear implications in research practice with both children and adults. Importantly, the distance between my age (early thirties) and with the participants' age shaped the fieldwork, influencing the processes of building rapport and the methods pursued. The greater the age difference (distance), the more difficult it was to quickly build rapport. This in turn dictated the methods. For instance, for the elderly informants, I was a child, and I found that instead of a more formal and structured approach, a story-telling type of dialogue worked best. Many even had children who were much older than I am. In some cases, my positionality as a researcher at a relatively young age was checked by research participants in places like *tej bets*. It was, for example, quite difficult to win the trust of older people in these local liquor houses using overt participant observation, drinking *tej* with the groups and disclosing the purpose of my visits. In one instance, a middle aged man (age approximately 55), an ex-weaver, asked me to show him my identity card because he was suspicious of my position as a

researcher with an affiliation to a University. In this case, my status as a researcher and my age intersected to shape the research process. I also found out that some of the male adults in the *tej bets* thought that I was involved in some sort of spying for the government. In my presence, they talked positively about the government that was ruling the country. But later, when they developed trust in me, they disclosed their grievances and complaints about the government. Talking politics was common in the *tej bets* during the fieldwork period, as the country was experiencing a political crisis due to strikes by young people in regions such as Oromia and Amhara.

Age difference also affected my relations with working children. Mostly, my conversations with very young children below the age of 10 were relatively difficult compared to conversations with older children and young people. During informal dialogues, the very young children usually preferred to provide short answers and phrases or to remain silent and smile. Especially if they were alone, they kept silent. Consequently, I found it relatively more difficult to interact with them. In most instances, I therefore approached children in groups as I had learned from repeated experience that with their peers they tended to interact with me more openly. Furthermore, to develop a rapport and have a smooth dialogue with young children, I used a more informal strategy of tacking between 'their issues' and 'my issue'. This involved initiating a conversation based on what they do or on their common practice (their issue), and then linking this discussion to what I wanted to know more about (my issue). For instance, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, in the village of Meketeya sefer, a few children (all male, ages approximately, 7-10) were sitting together and eating *gelati* (frozen sweets). I engaged in a conversation with them by asking where they got the *gelati* from so that I could also buy one. The boys insisted on getting it for me and one of them run to do so (I later found out that they wanted me to buy for them too). While waiting for the errand boy, I continued asking more about the *gelati,* sitting on the ground with the rest of the boys. As I observed, the common issue for the children was

the *gelati* that they were enjoying and its taste (their issue). I therefore jumped into the conversations and asked questions that were in line with what the boys were discussing. I then asked how they got money to buy the *gelati* (my issue). The children then responded that they received it from their parents for their spinning work (see chapter 8). To know about children's work, their everyday lives, including consumption was my issue. Such dialogues brought children in line with what I wanted to know more about. Sometimes, the children would be curious, asking questions about where I come from and what I was doing. In answer, I attempted to provide sufficient information in the way they could understand. Various encounters with both children and adults demonstrated that the strategy of tacking between their issue (the researched) and my issue (the researcher) ensured a good balance between a natural conversation and a focused interview. It also helps to quickly build rapport.

The other important issue is the positionality of research assistants (Turner 2010). In many cases, while acknowledging their own positionality, many researchers neglect their assistant's positionality. As explained above, particularly during the first two months of fieldwork, I relied on various people who work for local NGOs and local government offices. I did so with a strategy in mind to situate myself in the existing networks and develop rapport (Christensen & James 2008). Therefore, using a research assistant greatly helped to get a generalized understanding of the research site. However, the assistant's positionality had its own drawbacks. As explained earlier, my research assistant, Demissie, who had prior work experience as a community worker for NGOs on child labour issues, was born and raised in Addis Ababa from Gamo parents, and had been a weaver for over 30 years. He spoke the Gamogna language fluently. As we started to work together, he took me to NGO-targeted households where both adult and child weavers were found. During discussions with the adults (usually male weavers), the flow of the discourse was primarily towards the assistant's previous experience in anti-child labour and trafficking work. As a result, much of

the data I got in the initial stage of my fieldwork was heavily influenced by the problems of child labour, with uniform explanations that work is bad for children while schooling is good. The adults were not open and even hid the fact that their children worked in the home. I only learned this later when I met the children in the village and school settings. Interestingly, at a later stage of fieldwork, in the absence of the assistant, some of the male adults who initially spoke against child labour themselves disclosed that their children were engaged in weaving-related activities. In one instance, a male weaver (age approximately 50) who spoke against child weaving in the initial fieldwork period, revealed that his son (age 14) was involved in weaving. The man even invited me to observe how his son practiced making patterns under his guidance.

The other important point relating to the researcher's' positionality was the choice of households for observations and interviews. As Demissie mainly took me to households targeted by NGO projects, it meant that we overlooked other households with different characteristics (e.g., not supported by NGO projects). Therefore, although working with an assistant was quite helpful in learning about some dominant development discourses pertaining to child trafficking and child labour, it only gave me partial access to the research site, with a bias for NGO-targeted households and people. Sometimes it even constrained the opportunity of interacting with children in the households. This encounter informed my research, showing me that the assistants' positionality mattered in knowledge production. Using this knowledge, I then conducted most of my fieldwork without an adult assistant in order to be able to generate a more nuanced views on children's work.

Apart from adults, three boys (ages 12 to 17) served as my assistants and key informants too at different times during the fieldwork. Working with the boys greatly helped to create a space for children's participation (Cheney 2011). However, my attempts to have female assistants did not work. The gender difference, combined with the unavailability of girls in the children's everyday places constrained my choice of female assistants. Therefore, I relied solely on boys who guided me to their friends'

everyday places in the villages, including streets, football fields, youth centres and local tea rooms. The boys were also involved in the identification and selection of interview participants in both school settings and villages. They accompanied me to the youth centres where we watched European soccer league matches together on Sundays. They also assisted in the planning and trial of an auto-photography exercise which took place at the end of the fieldwork. In general, having these young people as my assistants definitely facilitated interactions with other children, mainly boys.

Nonetheless, the gendered positionality of my assistants shaped the selection of the children who participated in my research. In most cases, while those boys knew a lot of other young male weavers in their localities, they had relatively limited information about girl weavers. For instance, two of my assistants directed me to six other male weavers whom I interviewed. They had, however, difficulty in identifying female weavers in their own age group. As a result, finding female weavers was a challenge until I started going to schools and asked in a few classrooms whether there are weavers. Several female weavers then showed up. This process informed my research that in their own ways, children can serve as gate keepers, key informants and assistants, and can influence and contribute profoundly to knowledge production. Importantly, their age-based and gendered positionality affects the process of selecting informants.

In the sections below, I explain the specific ethnographic methods employed to generate data.

### 3.4.2 Observations

As a family of ethnographic methods, observations (participant and non-participant) were the main source of data in this research. Observations helped to understand the relational, generational and gender dimensions of children's work based on daily interactions in the workplaces. The observations were always complemented by informal unstructured interviews and random conversations with different people in the

research site. On a daily basis, the observed interactions, events, gatherings, child-adult relations, work intensity and other important information were worked out in my field notes which then served as empirical evidence. In total, I had informal conversations with over 360 people including men, women and children at different times and places such as villages, the Shiro Meda marketplace, playgrounds, on the streets, in tea rooms, in schools, youth centres, and local *tej bets* (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016). In the playgrounds, I talked with playing children (of both sexes) and in some cases I myself participated in children's play. For instance, there were some occasions when I got involved in playing *joteni* and *tezer*[6] with boys. Accompanied by my assistants, I visited local tea rooms and engaged in conversations with other young male weavers (ages 10-17) whom I found enjoying a snack – a biscuit (*pasti*) and tea. During several field visits in the summer, I observed girls playing *carre* while at the same time twisting threads. As stated earlier, I also watched soccer with boys on Sundays. Apart from this, an important element of the ethnographic research that involved participant observation was learning how to weave from boys.

### 3.4.3 Becoming a learner of weaving from child weavers

With the purpose of creating situated knowledge and understanding the life-worlds of the researched, many ethnographers learn the language of the researched. In my case, however, I learned how to weave from the children rather than the language of the Gamo people. As my research was urban-based where the participants speak Amharic fluently - my first language - the issue of language was not a problem in communicating with the local people, including children and young people. In fact, except for a few children who had recently migrated from the Gamo highlands, most of the young research participants know only basic Gamogna and spoke fluent Amharic as they used Amharic more frequently in their everyday lives. For this reason, my focus was more on learning how to weave in order to better understand the work conditions of child weavers.

Learning how to weave gave me a chance to delve into children's life-worlds, understand the nature of their work, and their immediate work environment. During my learning encounters, which took four months, five male child weavers between the ages of 13-16, served as my mentors in their home-based workplaces at Shamma and Meketeya sefer. Initially, I shared my interest in learning how to weave with five child weavers (of both sexes) whom I had conversations with in the Entoto Amba secondary school. Of these children, two showed an interest in teaching me and confirmed that their parents would not mind. Once I started going to their households, upon my request, these two boys linked me with their close friends in their respective villages who also showed a willingness to be my mentors.

The learning sessions took place at a time that was convenient for the young people involved - usually after school and on Saturdays. I compensated them for the training sessions and for their time by covering input costs and paying for the fabric I worked on under their guidance. My engagement in learning how to weave greatly reduced the researcher-researched power dynamic between us as I became a learner and the young people my mentors. Apart from this, the learning sessions gave me a chance to engage in dialogue pertaining to the boys' everyday lives and their different work. It was also helpful as a way of understanding that weaving is not a straightforward process, but a time-consuming vocational practice (see chapter 5).

*Figure 3.2: Learning how to weave from a boy*

*Source:* image shot by another 15 year-old boy, 2016

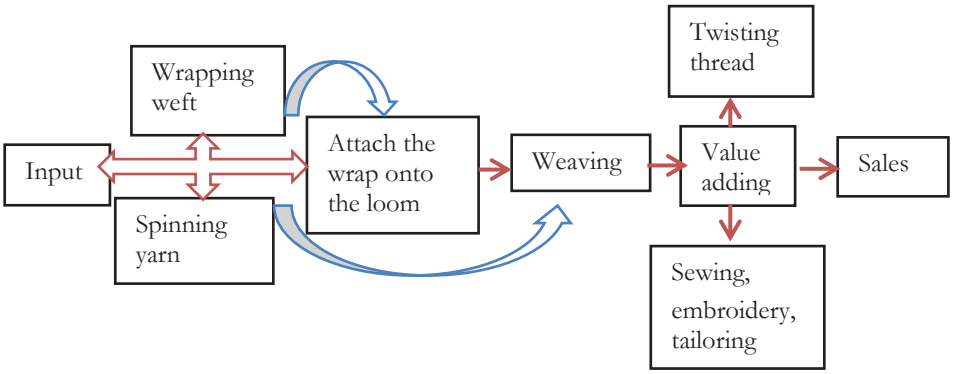
My experience of learning how to weave enabled me to understand the need to engage both the mind and the body in the practice. A mind with uninterrupted focus, and a body that can harmoniously operate the loom need to come together to perform weaving. This makes weaving an art – a harmonious use of the mind and the body to transform inputs into attractive, finely textured and colourful fabric. In terms of the body, the eyes, feet and arms have to be fully engaged whilst sitting in an appropriate position. Each bodily movement, the throwing of a shuttle, the beating of thread with the beam using arms, the pressing of a pedal with the foot, the monitoring eyes on each move, all have an impact on the quality and structure of the fabric. However, as a novice, I did not know what a quality fabric looks and feels like, let alone how this could be produced. Making mistakes was quite common, especially during the first few weeks of my practice. The mistakes I made included frequently breaking the threads, throwing the shuttle aimlessly, forgetting to beat the warp-thread, and pressing the wrong leg pedal. All these mistakes were the result of a lack of experience in coordinating my arms and feet to produce the necessary rhythmical movement. When using the arms and feet, I learned that it is crucial to be gentle with the thread, with the shuttle, with the beams, with the throwing and with the beating. When throwing a shuttle, knowing the exact location between the vertical

threads that it has to pass through was tricky for me. With every throw, I had to find the right place for the shuttle to pass through. Getting it wrong would always cause the thread to break. Getting this right was hard work for me. Experienced weavers, including working children, on the other hand, never seemed to worry about such small moves. I imagined these moves as a consistent gentle movement of the arms and feet, a movement I was not able to produce in such a short period of time.

Here are some challenges that I found in weaving practice. In the first place, it was difficult for me to engage in conversation whilst trying to weave. Whenever I did so, I broke a thread, or forgot to beat the cloth with the beam, or threw the shuttle from the wrong direction. Experienced child and adult weavers did not have these problems and could engage in weaving and conversation at the same time. In the second place, the homes where I practiced weaving were dimly lit. When weaving, in particular when threads broke, finding and fixing the broken threads was challenging in such dim light. Some adult informants complained as well, stating that weaving can cause sight problems, especially when one gets older. In the third place, during the rainy season and during cold weather, the wooden loom contracts, the shuttle gets damp, and the threads interlink with each other making weaving really difficult. I experienced this sometimes in July 2016. Not only a novice like me, even the highly experienced weavers complained that to weave during the rainy season is difficult as the cold weather makes the threads stick to each other. According to some adult weavers, whether the threads stick depends on the type of workplace: weaving in cold air is relatively difficult in workplaces that are made from mud and straw (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016). Those weavers working in new workplaces, in a concrete building, had no such complaints. My fourth challenge was that in all the homes that I practiced weaving, the chairs that we sat on were made from plain wood. I found sitting on these chairs for hours rather uncomfortable.

Importantly, the observations and daily interactions with the children created a chance to understand the different production processes in the weaving economy. Starting from raw material supplies to the selling of fabric, weaving involves different processes of production (see figure 3.3 below). Depending on the type of fabric produced, one needs to initially have the necessary raw materials (cotton, polyester thread, warp, thread weft, yarn, *calos, menen*). The warp needs to be wrapped. Then it needs to be attached onto the loom (*mequater*). Side by side, the weft or coloured yarn for the design needs to be spun. After this, one can start weaving which involves interlacing the vertical warp thread (that was once attached to the loom) with a spun weft or coloured yarn that is placed in the shuttle.

*Figure 3.3: Production processes in the weaving economy*




*Source:* author's fieldwork observations, 2016

As shown in the figure above, the actual weaving is just one component of the various production processes in the weaving economy. To produce a plain fabric, the weaving process involves repetitively throwing the shuttle from the right-hand side to the left-hand side of the loom and vice versa. While throwing the shuttle, the weaver needs to harmoniously press the leg pedals in a specific rhythm. The interlaced warp and yarn needs to be beaten by the heddle frame consistently. This gives a specific texture to the fabric. To have a uniform texture however, the weaver needs to be consistent while beating the warp. This process eventually leads to the production of a

specific type of fabric. One needs to know these basic processes to become a weaver. The making of patterns involves another complicated procedure depending on the type of design. Importantly, not all weavers know how to make designs. Of my mentors, three of them knew how to work on a few types of simple designs (namely, *zenbaba, aketo, jib egir*) while the other two knew how to produce plain fabric. Based on the guidance of my mentors, my leaning encounters were limited to the following key processes which are foundational to producing a plain fabric.

1) Press the right leg pedal to open a space for the shuttle
2) Throw the shuttle from the left-hand side to the right-hand side
3) Receive the shuttle on the right hand side
4) Using the left hand, pull the heddle frame straight towards the abdomen and beat the warp
5) Press the left pedal
6) With the left hand, push the heddle frame back to where it was
7) Throw the shuttle from the right-hand side to the left
8) Receive it on the left-hand side
9) Using the right hand, push the heddle frame towards the abdomen and beat the warp
10) Repeat the above processes sequentially (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016).

The above steps to produce a plain fabric required uninterrupted focus. For beginners in particular, focus is most important when beating the yarn with the heddle, and operating the pedals using both legs. As I understand it, one needs to appropriate and internalize the harmonious movement of the body to operate the loom and produce a fabric. In most cases, established weavers perform the above procedures subconsciously. My mentors were excellent in the way they did weaving. However, as I had to think about each process before performing it, my weaving was sluggish. Furthermore, I lacked consistency when beating the warp. When I threw the shuttle, I also broke the threads more frequently. In particular, breaking warp-threads was more common in my practice at *Meketaya sefer* because the input (warp) we used was thin. This gave my mentors an extra task as they had to search for the broken thread to interlink it once again. This led to the production of lower

quality fabric with an inconsistent texture. In spite of this, my mentors encouraged me to follow the above steps. All of them informed me that with frequent practice I could internalize the key processes and become a good weaver. Adult weavers had different ideas and doubted whether I would never cultivate greater skills as I was past the right learning period - childhood (see chapter 5).

In general, the learning encounter informed my research by establishing that weaving requires lots of practice and consistent engagement for several months and even years to reach the optimum level of efficiency. It also informed my research that the recent labelling of weaving as a hazardous occupation for children was simplistic and did not consider the production processes and the complexities of being and becoming a weaver (see chapters 5 and 6).

### 3.4.4 Interviews

Interviewing is an appropriate method to understand the experiences and responses of the researched, to discover their thoughts, feelings, and the meanings they attach to events and situations through time and space (Mears 2009: 18). In light of this, depending on the place and context, I conducted formal and informal, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. In particular, the interviews served to collect specific data on narrative accounts about the nature of different activities in the weaving economy, the importance of childhood in learning how to weave, and the generational and gendered division of labour. All the interviews were conducted by myself in Amharic. In many instances, I used a voice recorder to record the interviews, but only after securing oral consent from the interviewees. As shown in table 3.1 below, different groups of people, including children, young people, adults and the elderly, were involved.

*Table 3.1: Profile of semi-structured interview participants*

| **Semi structured in-depth interviews** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No** | Type of people | Age group | Gender | | Total |
| | | | Male | Female | |
| | **Weavers group** | | | | |
| 1. | Child weavers | 11-18 | 28 | 12 | 40 |
| 2. | Young adults (weavers) | 19-35 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| 3. | Adult weavers | 36-59 | 12 | 3 | 15 |
| 4. | Elderly people (weavers and ex-weavers)[7] | >60 | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| | Sub total | | 54 | 18 | 72 |
| | **Officials** | | | | |
| 1. | Woreda level | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 2. | Sub-city level | | 6 | - | 6 |
| 3. | City level | | 4 | - | 4 |
| 4. | Federal level | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | NGOs | | 5 | - | 5 |
| 6. | Schools | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | Sub total | | 20 | 6 | 26 |
| | **Total** | | **74** | **24** | **98** |

*Source:* fieldwork in 2015/2016

Specifically, the questions in the interviews with adult weavers related to their lived experiences, how they became weavers and how they view weaving (see appendix 3). The interviews with child workers served to understand their everyday lived experiences and material practices in their home-based workplaces and school settings. Moreover, the interviews focused on the children's views of the changes associated with formalizing the informal sector, the type of work they do, their schooling and how they combine work and schooling, the modes of payment for their work, their views about weaving, their life stories, and their family situation (see the appendix 1).

The interviews with Gamo adults (weavers and ex-weavers) served to understand the views pertaining to workplace and enterprise development policies, child labour campaigns, and schooling. I specifically asked adult workers to share their childhood experiences in relation to working in weaving enterprises, and their life-phase

transitions. Additionally, the Gamo elderly were asked about the historical and cultural roots of traditional weaving practices in the research vicinity, and their life trajectories and transitions across different political periods. This gave insight into the historical, cultural and generational meanings of childhood and children's work in urban Gamo society. On top of this, the in-depth interviews with the elderly and various officials that specifically addressed issues of enterprise development, child labour and education were greatly helpful to understand the discourses surrounding the weaving economy and the working children in it (see appendix 2).

### 3.4.5 Historiography

Understanding the changing patterns of Gamo children's work and childhoods is difficult in the absence of knowledge about the historical trajectories of the traditional weaving sector. However, there were almost no historical accounts or data that gave insight into the changes and continuities in children's work in Ethiopia and in the weaving economy. Pankhurst (1991) also noted the absence of children from the literature on Ethiopian history. I therefore used historical data, collecting oral history, facts, incidents, figures and dates from the past in order to understand the relationships and processes that have influenced the past, and continue to influence the present, and will certainly have an effect in the future (Berg 2001: 211-215). History, in this sense, is understood as a process of reviewing events or combinations of different events in order to extract accounts of what happened in the past (ibid). As explained above, the Gamo elderly who had lived in the research site for a relatively long period of time, served as sources of historical information. With the help of my research assistant, Demissie, the selection of these informants was based on their relatively long stay in Addis Ababa, working as weavers. Drawing on their personal experiences, the narratives and oral history about the weaving economy were thus recorded. The narratives helped to substantiate the data generated from historical literature at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES). However, the main problem was that most of the historical materials were rural-

based and adult-centric, telling very little about the history of working children in Ethiopia. Despite this, by combining the historiographic accounts with interviews, this research provides an analysis of the changing patterns in childhoods and children's work across generations, along with the changes in the informal weaving economy.

## 3.5 School survey

The main aim of conducting school surveys was to gain a generalized sense of understanding about the types of work children get involved in. I used the school survey results in a descriptive manner to complement the qualitative findings drawn from the ethnographic methods. I did so with an awareness of the limitations of a survey in terms of overlooking the meanings behind human activities (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983: 2), and oversimplifying the complexities of everyday lives (Denzin 1971: 168). Yet, in Ethiopia and elsewhere, surveys form the primary source of data for the development of child labour policies and programmes that are implemented by both government organizations and NGOs (Tekola et al 2009: 75-76). For instance, various organizations used the 2001 national child labour survey that showed a high prevalence of child labour in Ethiopia as a baseline for policy and practice interventions (see chapter 4). However, as will be shown in the empirical chapters, survey data does not, by itself, give a complete picture and only reveals a partial story pertaining to children's work.

Three data collectors were involved in the survey data collection process for this research. Two of them (females) were 4$^{th}$ year students at the College of Social Sciences of Addis Ababa University. The remaining one (male) was a freelance researcher with a Masters degree in social work. Before starting the data collection, I ran a half day workshop to acquaint the data collectors with the survey instrument, with ethics in research with children such as respecting children's decisions and views, and with issues of confidentiality.

The survey was school-based for four main reasons. Firstly, it was difficult to meet as many children as we wanted in their households

during school days. According to Gulele sub-city education officials, over 95% of children (ages 6 to18) in the sub-city were attending schools in 2016 (key informant interview notes, Addis Ababa, 2016). This means that it was relatively easy to find many children in school settings rather than in households. Secondly, a school-based survey gives better access to children due to the lower presence of adults and guardians to influence the research process. Thirdly, because of the concentration of students in the school setting, taking school surveys was less expensive and less time consuming than household surveys. Fourthly, there was no sampling frame that shows the number of working children in the weaving economy and in the households of the research site. The informality of the weaving economy itself complicated the task of locating those households where child weavers were available. However, the school survey greatly eased the difficulty of finding working children.

Some criteria were required to choose the schools in which to undertake the survey. Thus, the type of schools, either private or public, and the availability of child weavers were set as criteria. With regards to the type of schools, public schools were chosen as many children attended them. One report showed that 87% of the children in Gulele sub-city Woreda 06, were students in public schools (Gulele Sub-city 2014). In 2016, there were 18 primary and four secondary public schools in Gulele sub-city. With regards to the availability of child weavers, I consulted officials from the Woreda 01 and 06 Women's and Children's Affairs Office and two NGOs. Based on this, schools with a high population of working children and targeted by NGO anti-child labour programmes were chosen. The officials gave information regarding the relatively high concentration of child weavers in two public schools, namely Entoto Amba (secondary school) and Addis Zemen (primary school). These schools are located in Woreda 01 and 06 - localities that are surrounded by clusters of home-based and factory-based weaving enterprises (see map 3.1 above). Addis Zemen School is surrounded by clusters of home-based weaving enterprises in which weaving was a source of livelihood for over 60% of the households in the area (ibid).

The secondary school, Entoto Amba, is located in the centre of Shiro Meda market where weaving fabrics are sold.

Once these two schools had been chosen, we went on to select student respondents, in collaboration with school officials. To ensure a proper representation of the student population, we applied a stratified random sampling procedure. The stratification was done proportionately based on three key variables: students' educational status (primary and secondary school), Grade levels (Grades 4-10) and gender (male and female). Gender-based stratification helped us to ensure representation of male and female student sub-groups, while educational status and grade level stratification was useful to ensure the representation of students from every class. Furthermore, additional inclusion criteria were in place to determine the cut off age for participants, since very young children (as young as age 6) who were not involved in weaving-related practices attended primary school, and young people in their twenties were found in the secondary school. We therefore needed a cut off age in order to sample the right group of child workers. As explained above, because of the emphasis of this research on children, age 18 was taken as the upper cut-off point, while earlier ethnographic findings served as a basis to determine the lower cut-off point. In many instances, Gamo children usually start weaving when they attain the proper height (see chapter 5). As this usually happens from the age of 10, this age was taken as the lower cut off point. According to the student list that we received from the Addis Zemen School official, most of the student population below Grade 4 was under the age of 10. For this reason, we decided to include students who were in Grade 4 and above.

As shown in Table 3.2 below, we selected 416 (23l male and 185 female) of the 2100 secondary school population, and 262 (128 male and 134 female) of the 1318 primary school students. In both cases, the sample population was approximately 20% of the total student population[8]. This percentage is proportionate for each respondent from the various Grade levels and gender.

*Table 3.2: Sampling based on students' Grade level and gender in two schools*

| ***Grade Level*** | ***Number of students*** | | | ***Sample size*** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| | Addis Zemen primary school | | | | | |
| 4 | 141 | 132 | 273 | 28 | 26 | 54 |
| 5 | 98 | 150 | 248 | 19 | 30 | 49 |
| 6 | 74 | 119 | 193 | 16 | 25 | 41 |
| 7 | 174 | 116 | 290 | 34 | 23 | 57 |
| 8 | 154 | 160 | 314 | 31 | 30 | 61 |
| Sub total | 641 | 677 | 1318 | 128 | 134 | 262 |
| | Entoto Amba secondary school | | | | | |
| 9 | 683 | 521 | 1204 | 134 | 103 | 237 |
| 10 | 488 | 408 | 896 | 97 | 82 | 179 |
| Sub total | 1171 | 929 | 2100 | 231 | 185 | 416 |
| **Total** | **1812** | **1606** | **3418** | **359** | **319** | **678** |

*Source:* author's fieldwork in the schools, 2016

After stratifying the respondents based on the aforementioned criteria, the deputy school administrators of both schools were involved in identifying those classes (sections) where no teaching-learning activity was taking place at the time of our visits. In both schools, students were clustered into several sections: 46 classes (25 for Grade 9 and 21 for Grade 10) in Entoto Amba, and 23 classes (from Grades 4-8) in Addis Zemen in 2016. Many of the classes had at least one free hour with no academic activities during our visits. Thus, we visited multiple classes based on the school officials' identification and approval. The sample population of the school survey was thus comprised of secondary school students from 25 sections (12 and 13 sections from Grade 9 and 10 respectively) and primary school students from all the 23 sections in Addis Zemen School.

After the school officials had identified and given us free classrooms, we selected the actual respondents using simple random sampling. As every student already had an assigned identification number from the school for the sake of registration and grading, we called random student identification numbers into the classrooms. In cases when students with those numbers were absent or, as in a few cases, were not willing to take part in the survey, we called other student numbers. If we exceeded the required number of either male or female respondents, we would call

more random numbers to get the required number of male and female respondents.

The survey was conducted in Amharic. Initially, we pilot-tested the questionnaires on 20 students (half of them primary and half secondary). Through these tests we identified a number of problems in the instrument, including content and language issues, the ordering of the questions, and missing questions. In particular, respondents gave feedback on language and contents. For example, the Amharic interpretation for the term 'class repetition' which is '*medgem*' was not clear for students. The term '*mewdek*', that literally means 'failing' was a more common term among students. In addition, some words were considered 'adult-centred'. The term '*alutawi*', for instance, whiche literally means 'negative', was one of the words that students found unclear. Thus, the pilot test was helpful to improve the questionnaire prior to the actual survey. The table below shows an overview of the main demographic characteristics of the survey respondents.

*Table 3.3: Survey respondents' demographic characteristics*

| No | Characteristics of respondents (n= 678) | b) Children's everyday activities after schooling (n= 678) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Gender<br>Male 359 (52. 9 %)<br>Female 319 (47.1 %) | Total working children (443) 65.3 %<br>Male 56.8 %<br>Female 74.9% |
| 2. | Age<br>Mean age 15.3<br>Standard deviation 2.4 | Children working in the weaving economy<br>Ethnic background Gamo 93.2 %<br>Amhara 4.1 %<br>Other SNNP 2.7 % |
| 3. | Educational level<br>*Primary school students*<br>Grade 4 54 (7.9 %)<br>Grade 5 49 (7.2 %)<br>Grade 6 41 (6.0%)<br>Grade 7 57 (8.4 %)<br>Grade 8 61 (8.9 %)<br>**Total 262 (38.6%)**<br>*Secondary school students*<br>Grade 9 237 (34.9 %)<br>Grade 10 179 (26.4 %)<br>**Total 416 (61.3 %)** | Activities in weaving economy<br>**(n=678)** Male Female<br>Weaving (73) 11.0 % 94.5% 5.5%<br>Spinning (121) 17.8 % 74.4% 25.6%<br>Twisting (71) 10.5 % 11.3% 88.7%<br>Sewing (74) 10.9 % 32.4% 67.6%<br>Embroidery (45) 6.6 % 60.0% 40.0% |
| 4. | **Ethnicity**<br>Gamo 347 (51.2 %)<br>Amhara 190 (28 %)<br>Oromo 64 (9.4 %)<br>Other SNNP 64 (9.4 %)<br>Tigre 12 (1.8 %)<br>Gambela 1 (.01 %) | Other productive activities<br>(n=678) Male Female<br>Taxi assistance 41 92.7 % 7.3 %<br>Shoe shining 54 98.1 % 1.9 %<br>Other businesses* 102 55.9 % 44.1 % |
| 5. | Migrants from Gamo highlands (n=347)<br>Male 35 (10.0 %)<br>Female 28 (8. 0 %) | Reproductive activities<br>(n=678) Male Female<br>Cooking food 220 16.8 % 83.2 %<br>House cleaning 293 28.7 % 71.3 %<br>Fetching water 274 51.1 % 48.9 %<br>Running an errand 233 55.4 % 44.6 %<br>Washing clothes 272 38.6 % 61.4 %<br>Coffee making 178 18.0 % 82.0 % |

*Source:* School survey conducted by the author, 2016.

*Other businesses include involvement in family business such as sales work in small shops, wood work, Garaj work, selling chewing gum, etc...

## 3.6 Data analysis

Making sense of massive amounts of data and identifying significant patterns is a challenge in the process of data analysis (Patton 1990). In particular, if data is collected using multiple methods, as was the case in this study, then different data analysis techniques need to be employed to arrive at a useful interpretation and presentation of the data. This research, therefore, used various data analysis techniques with supportive software. For the school survey, the data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 17 software. This generated a descriptive statistical result and was used in this thesis sparingly to complement the qualitative research findings.

For the qualitative material, I used Atlas ti-7, although the process of qualitative data analysis was more iterative, involving different phases. It started during fieldwork and continued into the post-fieldwork phase. During fieldwork, the recorded data from observations, interviews and other methods were organized on a daily basis. Field notes and interviews were entered into a Microsoft Word database. If data was in a digital form (tape-recorded), Amharic verbatim transcriptions and translations were done with the help of two assistants who are experienced translators with educational backgrounds in English literature and educational psychology.

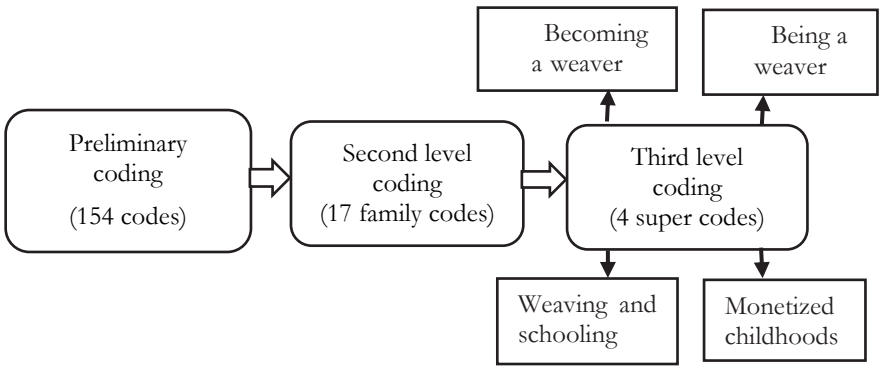
However, the dilemma around translation and transcription is often unacknowledged, let alone discussed; among scholars whose research involves translation from other languages into English (Temple & Young 2004: 165). There is always the potential to lose meanings in languages. Another dilemma is associated with the translator's identity and their role is often not explicitly addressed in research projects (ibid: 166). Nonetheless, translators play a significant role in the process of knowledge production by giving meaning and vocabulary while interpreting the language. With this understanding, I had discussions with the translators to understand their reflections on the translation process and their impression of the data. I also checked on the

commonality and diversity of their translations in order to have a more uniform interpretation of the data.

After receiving the English version of the interview transcripts, I imported them, together with the field notes, into the qualitative software Atlas-ti 7 for analytical purposes and coding. During coding, key themes that emerged from the materials were identified and transformed into categorical labels. Murchison (2010: 116) explained that key themes can be extracted from the voluminous ethnographic records and interview details by looking at the recurrence of certain ideas, relationships, stories, patterns, symbols, phrases disparities, commonalties and pictures. Consequently, I could identify reoccurring ideas as key themes. Finally, the identified themes were sorted, examined and isolated in order to develop meaningful patterns and processes.

The coding process with the Atlas-ti software involved three steps: identifying preliminary codes, categorizing code families, and identifying other categorizations in order to arrive at super codes (see appendix). 154 codes emerged from the first level of coding. These were then worked out and sub-categorized under 17 code families in the second level of coding. Finally, the 17 code families were further conceptualized into four super codes (broad themes). These super codes were; becoming a weaver, being a weaver, schooling and work, and monetized childhoods.

*Figure 3.4: Coding processes using Atlas ti-7 software*




With the exception of the historical chapter that was largely drawn from historical materials and document analysis, the four super codes have served as organizing frameworks for the empirical chapters (from chapters 5-8).

With regards to documental and historical materials, analysis of these involved the examination and interpretation of online and offline materials, written in English and Amharic, in order to generate empirical knowledge about the research subject. Accordingly, the strategic plans, policy discourses, pamphlets, budget documents, and training manuals produced by government organizations and NGOs that provide information on the weaving economy, children's education and child labour campaigns were reviewed and analysed to provide a full picture pertaining to the changes and continuities in the weaving economy and childhoods. Bowen (2009: 29-30) explains five benefits of document analysis. First, documents can provide information about the research context and the research participants. This information may include the background of the research site, and historical insights and past events that can help researchers to understand specific issues from their historical roots. Second, some information that can be found in documents may suggest a rethink of the research questions and more observations to supplement the research data. Third, documents can provide an addition to the knowledge base by providing supplementary

data. Fourth, document analysis can be helpful to track development processes, particularly to identify and compare changes. And fifth, documents can be used to verify findings from other sources of data: if there are variations between actual data findings and the available documents, researchers need to investigate further. Therefore, in the course of document analysis, these five useful points were considered.

## 3.7 Ethics

For this research, I consulted the ethical rules on research with children that are outlined in the 2009 manual of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research and World Vision International. This manual highlights eleven ethical rules. These are: protecting participants from harm, research participation on a voluntary basis, respecting the cultures and traditions of participants, establishing equal relationships as much as possible, confidentiality, reciprocity, avoiding unrealistic promises, ensuring the researcher's safety, respecting privacy, taking responsibility for visitors, and taking responsibility for images (Norwegian Centre for Child Research and World Vision International 2009). However, while these ethical codes of conduct are important, their application in research practice is sometimes contested and may not be fully materialized, as was the case in my research. During field visits to households, schools and workplaces, it was not always possible to ensure the privacy of the participants due to the presence of adults or other people. I was involved in more informal interviews and conversations with both children and adults, and in all the semi-structured interviews I attempted to achieve privacy by choosing the places for the interviews within the research site that did not attract other people's attention. For example, all the semi-structured interviews with children were conducted outside the home, in the school environment, in the absence of observers, within classroom and open environment settings (such as playgrounds). Despite these contestations, the most important ethical principle that was strictly applied in this research was the avoidance of any practice with potential harm to the participants. Importantly, culturally accepted values and

practices were always taken into account. This was achieved by being sensitive to the actions, feelings and emotions of the child participants, including child-adult relations in the households, in the course of the data collection.

The other important ethical issue is informed consent. All participants' oral consent was secured before conducting interviews and surveys. I also took the participants' consent into account when using their views, pictures and other empirical materials. I provided sufficient information to the children about the purpose of my visits and interviews. The children were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time, something which sometimes happened. For instance, while conducting the survey in the secondary school, several students declined to participate. The students claimed that they had recently participated in another survey and therefore did not want to be involved in my survey. Their choice was respected.

Furthermore, as the research was overt, all the research participants were aware of the purpose of the field visits and interviews. In research with children, parental consent can be obtained when the children are too young and has no cognitive capacity to provide consent themselves (Spriggs 2010: 8). Giving consent is thus determined by children's cognitive capacity to adequately understand research matters. In the case of this research however, parental consent was not usually required as the children who participated were capable of understanding the purpose of the research. Moreover, as the research viewed children as social actors, their ability to give consent was not questioned. However, in the presence of household members, oral parental consent was asked for.

Other research ethics were confidentiality and anonymity. Since this research takes children as social actors and active agents who can influence and be influenced by the social environment, their views were respected and their life experiences were not treated differently. However, at the start of the interviews and surveys, every child and adult participant was informed that any information they shared would be anonymized. Moreover, I strictly adhered to anonymity when using the

narratives, ideas, images and life stories in the research material and other publications. The participants' identities were concealed by using pseudonyms and other information which could disclose their identity, such as place, was intentionally changed. Apart from this, although the pictures that I took with the children had their oral consent, their pictures in this thesis are blurred to conceal their identity. In some cases, adults, guardians or employers wanted to know what information the children had given to the researcher. I did not, however, pass on any information to them, as this might have jeopardized the trust built with child participants.

## 3.8 Conclusion

Building on the analytical framework developed in chapter two, this chapter argued for the relevance of a mixed methods approach in the analysis of local and global childhoods. With qualitative ethnographic materials and historical data as the main sources of data, and school surveys as supplementary data, the chapter has demonstrated the implications of each method and the negotiations involved in gaining access. The chapter has also described the ethical practices in research with children and adults. Furthermore, the chapter provided a reflection of how the gendered and age-based positionality of the researcher, the researched, and the research assistants influenced the process of knowledge production.

Drawing from the data analysis discussed in this chapter, the subsequent five chapters provide an analysis of the empirical materials that I gathered along with the theoretical implications. For a start, drawing on historical materials and interviews, the next chapter sets out a historical analysis of the changes and continuities in the urban weaving economy, along with changing childhoods in three politico-historical periods.

## Notes

[1] Local bars that sell traditional liquor named *tej* which is made from honey.

[2] First, I collected the GPS locations of the specific fieldwork sites. This map then was developed with the assistance of Mr. Mola Maru, a faculty member of Addis Ababa University, department of Geography and Environmental Studies. A map produced by the Central Statistical Agency (2007) was used to develop this location map.

[3] A research assistant named Demisse (male, age 46) as well as local government officials in the Woreda 01 Women and Children's Affairs offices, reported that over 10 male adults who were believed to have brought boys from the countryside and hired them in their respective households to work in weaving, were given warnings from the police in 2015 (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016). Upon the order of government officials, the adults took the children back to their original homes. To ensure that they would not bring children again, they were made to sign a paper to that effect.

[4] The local NGO, Mission for Community Development Organization (MCDP), worked on child labour issues in the weaving economy and on enterprise development for over 15 years. The local government officials were from Gulele sub-city Woreda 01 and 06 Women and Children's Affairs offices.

[5] He served as a community worker on an anti-child labour project named E-FACE until August 2014.

[6] This is one of the games children play with a small ball on a rope and attached on an erect electricity pole.

[7] These interviews were mainly used as a source of historical data.

[8] As the total population of students in the two school was known and the study involved a cross-sectional design, Yamane's sample size estimation ($n=\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$) was used, where 'n' denotes the sample size, 'N' stands for the total population, and 'e' is the margin of error which is 5%. Based on this estimation, the sample size that we needed was 346 students from the total 3418 student population of both schools. However, during the survey, we found that very few students worked as weavers in the new workplaces. The aim of conducting a survey was to get a sufficient number of child weavers working in home-based and factory based workplaces for a comparative analysis of their everyday lives and time-use. Hence, in an attempt to have more child weavers, we took a larger sample population than the sample size estimation, taking 20% of the total student population, which was approximately 678 students.

# 4 The weaving economy and changing childhoods: a historical analysis in three political-economic periods

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter teases out the role of state and policy changes that have shaped the urban weaving economy, the collective experiences of Gamo weavers, and thus the changing discourses on childhoods, from a historical perspective in three politico-historical periods. The first politico-historical period, the imperial era (1890-1974) under a feudal system, is characterized by monarchical rule, a struggle against colonialism, and the complex processes of modernization that the Ethiopian state experienced. The second politico-historical period is the Marxist-Leninist era (1974-1991) of military dictatorship. The role of the state in this period was directed towards redressing social inequalities and creating a classless society by changing the long-established agrarian relations of production, and by promoting artisans via cooperative development programmes and public consciousness campaigns. Finally, the third politico-historical period is one of a developmental state (post-1991) during which neoliberal economic policies such as privatization were promoted - with an increased role for the state.

The chapter provides a response to the first research question: How and to what extent have political-economic and historical processes transformed the urban weaving economy, and children's role in it? Drawing from historical materials and key informant interviews, the chapter demonstrates the changing discourses of Ethiopian childhoods from what was 'invisible' in the imperial period, to 'crisis childhoods' during the socialist Derg regime, and then to the 'work-free childhoods' in the post-1991 developmental state. Unlike the previous political-economic periods, the post-1991 developmental state is exceptional in appropriating and harmonizing the ideals of global work-free childhoods into the country's development programmes. As argued in the chapter, the work-free childhoods discourse is not per se associated with anti-

child labour programmes; rather its ideals are incorporated in broader policies (i.e., promoting the private sector, universal schooling campaigns). The chapter claims that anti-child labour discourses and programmes in the weaving economy are the by-products of the ratification of the ILO Minimum Age Convention 138, the 2001 national child labour survey, increased school expansion, and the construction of factories for weavers.

The following sections highlight the key changes and continuities in the urban weaving economy and the changing childhood experiences of Gamo weavers from different generations of kinship descent in the three politico-historical periods.

## 4.2 Gamo weavers during the imperial era (pre-1974)

The knowledge of weaving precedes the 1880-90s imperial territorial expansion[1] in southern Ethiopia and the foundation of Addis Ababa as the capital city of the Ethiopian empire (Olmstead 1975: 90). Historically, the key driving forces for the settlement of first generation Gamo weavers in Addis Ababa were the establishment of Addis Ababa as a capital city in 1889, along with the battle of Adwa - an anti-colonial struggle against Italian invaders in 1896. Firstly, the emergence of towns and cities served as a driving force for the creation of new markets (Pankhurst 1961, Krasten 1972, Donham 1986). Likewise, the establishment of Addis Ababa as the capital city of the Ethiopian empire in 1889 formed an inspiration for Gamo weavers to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of a market for their fabrics throughout the 20th century (Jackson 1971, Olmstead 1975, Pankhurst et al 1964).

Secondly, the battle of Adwa was a key historical event leading to first generation Gamo weavers settling in Addis Ababa. Drawing from oral history, key informants revealed that the first settlers in Addis Ababa were warriors (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016)[2]. In the aftermath of the victory of Adwa, the returning warriors from northern Ethiopia, their place of origin, had a brief stay in the newly emerging garrison town of

Addis Ababa. Among the warriors were a few members of the Gamo ethnic group Dorze,[3] who possessed weaving skills. In Addis Ababa, they found a market for their fabric (*shemma*) and asked the Emperor for a place where they could stay temporarily to make *shemma* and exchange it in the market. With the Emperor's approval, they then settled in places near *Piasa* and *Gedam Sefer*. The accuracy of this historical information that I gathered from key informants was verified during fieldwork when visiting a local area of *Yohannes* near *Gedam sefer*. Here I met and interviewed an elderly male Gamo weaver, approximately 70 years old, who was the great-grandson of a first settler weaver.

Although the Dorze were not the only weavers in the country, the first settler Dorze weavers demonstrated their superior skills and, between 1898 and 1910, established a reputation as the most talented weavers in Addis Ababa (Burley 1978: 147). The *shemma* (fabric) that they produced was reportedly competitive with textile imported from elsewhere. At the start of the 20th century, textile products were imported from the United States, France, Britain, India, and Turkey, accounting for over 88% of the total imports into the Ethiopian empire (Powell-Cotton, cited in Pankhurst et al 1964: 62). With increased production by first generation Dorze weavers, textile imports started to diminish, as reported by a British consul in 1905-06. The consular report reads as follows:

> The ready-made *shemma* forms a considerable item among imports. *shemma* is two qualities – bleached and unbleached. The first have a broad red stripe at some distance from the border and is patronized by the well to do; the second is worn by the poorer classes and is striped in various colors in narrow lines near the edge. Native woven *shemma* is finer and more lasting than imported. Owing to the ease of introducing the cheaply imported thread into the web in a native loom, the sale of imported *shemma* is decreasing (PRO 3747, 1905-06:5 cited in Burley 1978: 146)

The above report showed that Dorze weavers used imported thread to produce better quality and less expensive *shemma* compared to the imported fabric. Subsequent to the battle of Adwa, a high level of

resistance by the locals towards imported items also contributed to the penetration of Dorze weavers' fabrics in the local textile market (Pankhurst 1968). However, market exchanges were, to a large extent, conducted either through bartering or by using primitive money -a salt bar (*Amole*). As a result, taxes were paid in kind in which the tax levied on the Dorze weavers and a few other communities in southern Ethiopia like the Sidamo, was *Buluko* (traditional duvet) that the weavers supplied to the nobility (Gebre-Wold 1962).

Emperor Menilik II wanted to substitute imported textiles with locally made fabric (Gebre-Wold 1962). He thus encouraged more people, including those from other ethnic groups, to take up weaving. He even sent a few Dorze weavers to *Anko Ber* (the former seat of the Emperor) to share their knowledge with Amhara weavers and train more Amhara people to become weavers (Pankhurst 1961). This increased the population of weavers in Addis Ababa. In 1910, the population of Dorze weavers working in Addis Ababa was estimated to be over 3000 (Garretson 1974 cited in Burley 1978: 148). With the increasing population of Addis Ababa, more weavers come to the city in the period 1911-1940. These weavers were mainly male migrants from other Gamo communities who learned weaving skills from earlier migrant Dorze weavers.

Olmstead (1975) reported that it was the Dorze weavers who trained other Gamo clans[4] such as the Webera, Dita, and Chencha how to weave. As such, weaving has slowly become a skill associated with other communities belonging to the Gamo ethnic group. Nonetheless, due to the established reputation of Dorze weavers, many people in Addis Ababa still interchangeably use the names Dorze and Gamo to refer to weavers. In fact, during my fieldwork, many non-Gamo people that I met did not distinguish the Dorze from the Gamo people (fieldwork notes, Addis Ababa, 2016).

Before the 1940s, weavers formed part of the households of the nobility or military leaders encamped in garrisons, with production taking place under their roofs. One study reported that:

> The Dorze began to produce *shemma* on orders of individuals who also supplied raw materials like warp and weft. In the beginning, they did not have fixed workplaces. Instead, they used the compounds of their customers' households (Karsten 1972: 42).

Under this arrangement, several hundreds of Dorze weavers produced fabric for the nobility: they supplied the required fabric to the households, received payment in kind and then moved on to other households (Olmstead 1975: 90).

## 4.3 Modernization processes and the emergence of peripheral capitalism (1941-1974)

The period between 1941 and 1974 is seen as the era of modernization in Ethiopian history (Ottaway 1976, Chole 2004). The processes of development in this period cannot be detached from the broader global processes of the time in which a modernization theory was largely viewed as a doctrine of development in the post-second world war period. As such, modernization theory was applied in practice using the rhetoric of eradicating backwardness across the Global South – importantly, under the leadership of the United States of America (Bernstein 1971). In Ethiopia, as in many other developing countries, there was thus an increased move towards a capitalist economy with direct investment by private enterprises, and development aid from western countries, leading to the emergence of 'peripheral capitalism'[5]. In the Ethiopian context, peripheral capitalism refers to an underdeveloped economic system from the 1950s onwards, comprised of both the indigenous feudal social system and the new mode of production (with the appearance of manufacturing industries) (Markakis & Ayele, 1978: 45).

The key modernization processes that Ethiopia passed through in the post-second world war period included the expansion of education, the

re-introduction of a national currency and the consolidation of monetary institutions such as banks. Much effort was also made to industrialize the economy with the help of a key development partner – the United States of America - that offered substantial economic aid (Markakis & Ayele 1978: 34). Hence, several commercial farms were introduced and textile factories and other industries were opened. Nonetheless, most of these were either owned or controlled by foreign firms.

These development processes led to the emergence of a new working class and the first generation of educated people that consumed western-style clothes and other imported commodities. In contrast to the early 1900s when society resisted imported items (Pankhurst 1964), during this era, western clothing was promoted by the state media with the introduction of specific dress codes for particular events. For instance, the national radio broadcast the requirement to wear Gabardine as a dress code for special events attended by Emperor Haile Selassie (Wola 2001: 98). With the increased move towards modern clothing, the weaving economy faced increased competition from imported textiles and second hand clothes. As such, the influences of development processes were on the rise during this period, even shaping the types of fabrics weavers produced. For instance, the sizes of *shemma* started to follow the trends in western clothing. In the period before the 1950s, *shemma* dress would cover the whole body - from neck to ankles. However, women's *shemma (kemis*) became shorter following the introduction of short skirts (Mamian 1964:19 as cited in Kidane 2010). Moreover, the Gamo weavers introduced complex fabric patterns *(tibeb)* in the 1950s as they started to think about different fabric motifs (Kidane 2010: 59). They also had a greater market for their fabrics.

The restructuring of the urban space in Addis Ababa, which started during the brief period of fascist Italian occupation (1936-1941), led to the emergence of the biggest open market in the country - *Markato*. Several weavers in the post-1941 period sold their fabrics on the streets of *Markato*. This represented a new way of selling, in contrast to working on individual orders. Further modernization processes in the post-1941

period, discussed below, also contributed to new developments in the weaving economy.

One key component of the modernization process in the 1940s was the consolidation of financial institutions with the assistance of the UK and the re-introduction and widespread circulation of paper money[6] (Mauri 1997). Prior to the Italian invasion in 1936, most market transactions were conducted using 'primitive money' which included a salt bar (*Amole*), pieces of cloth, and an iron bar (Pankhurst 1962: 213). For instance, in 1905, weavers exchanged their *shemma* for a mule load of salt (ibid: 224). Likewise, primitive money was ubiquitous after liberation from the brief Italian occupation in 1941, during which period neither a national currency nor a financial institution existed in Ethiopia. Nonetheless, by the beginning of the 1950s, the banking system was relatively well-developed with the widespread circulation of a national currency. This had its own impact on Gamo weavers and their relationships with money. For instance, as discussed in chapter 8, the culture of offering a financial incentive to child weavers started in this period.

Moreover, the increased circulation of the national currency in the 1960s, combined with improved road links[7] that connected Addis Ababa with the town of Arba Minch (which was the capital of the Gamo highlands) led to a change in the organization of weaving with the introduction of sub-contracting arrangements in which several weavers and ex-weavers become traders who received a bulk of fabric from other weavers which they re-sold in various rural and urban markets (Olmstead 1973: 232, Krasten 1972: 97, Olmstead 1975). In many cases, Gamo weavers who lived in towns and cities started to work on individual requests or with permanent contracts with traders who supplied inputs. Under this arrangement, living and working in the urban area had two economic advantages for the weavers in the 1960s (Krasten 1972: 122). Firstly, with the growth and concentration of a working class population in urban areas, there was a relatively better market and higher price for weavers' fabrics. Secondly, the yarn and other inputs were usually

cheaper in urban areas than in the rural Gamo highlands. These economic factors, combined with the already existing higher social and cultural values of weaving in the rural Gamo highlands (discussed below), contributed to the increased mobility of Gamo men from the countryside to Addis Ababa. In the mid-20th century, about 77% of the men in rural Dorze areas combined weaving with agriculture, while 43% of Dorze men were already living outside the rural Gamo highlands (Olmstead 1973: 232, Halperin & Olmstead 1976:149). In this way, many communities in the Gamo highlands became female-dominated.

Furthermore, as part of the modernization process, another key development in the 1960s and early 1970s was an attempt by the government to marginalize the informal economy. Favouring the formal economy and discouraging informality had been taking place over the previous 60 years although the measures taken by numerous governments varied considerably. During the imperial period, selling fabrics on the streets of *Markato* was sometimes forbidden - a key problem that older generation weavers faced. A few elderly informants reported being jailed by the police because of this. An elderly male weaver named Gizaw (age 74), for instance, recalled how he was jailed for four days in the 1960s because the police caught him with his fabric on the streets of *Markato* (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 06-01-2016). Yet despite all the challenges and new developments, the weaving economy was resilient[8]. As explained above, it even continued to expand, belying the ideal of modernization theory that presented development as a linear process from a traditional to a modern capitalist society. Nonetheless, artisans in general and weavers in particular were marginalized groups in many parts of Ethiopia, including Addis Ababa, in the pre-1974 period.

## 4.4 Overt marginalization of weavers in the pre-1974 period

One key collective experience of the pre-1974 weavers was a widespread marginalization of artisans. This was historically common in many Ethiopian societies, with artisans, including weavers, openly despised in

various regions of the country (Pankhurst & Freeman 2003, De Sisto 2014). However, spatial and temporal differentiations played an important role in determining how artisans were viewed by society at large. In some politico-historical periods and places they were relatively respected and, conversely, they were looked down upon in other places and times (Pankhurst & Freeman 2003). With regards to Gamo weavers, while they enjoyed a high social status in the rural Gamo highlands, they were, in contrast, looked down upon in cities like Addis Ababa. Gamo weavers have, therefore had to negotiate their social positions at different times and places.

Earlier anthropological studies reported that the social stratification of rural Gamo society consisted of two different groups[9] divided by patrilineal descent and occupation. These two groups were 'citizens' (*Mala*) and non-citizens (T*s'omma*) (Olmstead 1975: 224). Weaving and farming were culturally the two highly respected occupations, with the workers acquiring the better social status of '*Mala*' (Olmstead 1975). In contrast, other artisans such as tanners and potters were despised and explicitly categorized as the lower socioeconomic status of T*s'omma*. Unlike the *Mala*, the T*s'omma* were historically marginalized, treated with disdain, viewed as slaves, and barred from owning land. In the pre-1974 period, a strategy by young male Gamo T*s'omma* to escape marginalization in the countryside was to migrate out of the area and take up weaving in urban centres (Freeman 2003: 197). Thus, in the last few decades, many male Gamo, including those who belonged to the lower socioeconomic class, migrated to Addis Ababa to become weavers.

Simply living and working in the urban centre itself reinforced the high cultural value ascribed to weaving among rural Gamo communities. Older Gamo men originating from the countryside that I had discussions with in Addis Ababa explained that the Gamo people in rural areas thought of weavers in the urban areas as richer because of their spending patterns. For instance, Bizuayehu, a male elderly Gamo weaver (age, approximately 72) explained that, due to the higher social and economic status of weavers who moved between urban centres and the countryside

in the 1960s, at the age of 12 he became very keen to travel to Addis Ababa so that he too could become a weaver. To bring this about, he begged his parents to send him to his uncle who was a weaver living in Addis Ababa. His parents did not agree to his departure so when his uncle visited the countryside 55 years ago, Bizuayehu left for Addis Ababa without informing his parents. There, Bizuayehu learned how to weave from his uncle. After three years of practice (roughly at the age of 16), he became an established weaver. Since then, he has lived a weavers' life, included spending a couple of months every year in his place of origin in the countryside (interview notes, Addis Ababa: 06-10-2016).

While the Gamo weavers maintained a high social status in the countryside, these same weavers had, in contrast, a low status in Addis Ababa and faced overt marginalization (Burley 1978). Early settlers from other ethnic groups, particularly the Oromo and Amhara, had traditionally marginalized different occupational groups. The Amhara, for instance, despised some groups of artisans, particularly the *Bete Israel* (called locally *Fellasha*) (Abbink 1984: 140). Likewise, some Oromo clans also subordinated artisans. An old Oromo man (non-weaver, aged 71) that I met in the *tej bet* at Meketeya Sefer noted that in his clan, '*Selale Oromo'* a man's occupation could be a determining factor when asking for the hand of a girl in marriage (field notes, Addis Ababa: 04-07-2016). The girl's family would sometimes assess the man's occupation and that of his ancestors' (going back seven generations). The marriage proposal would probably be refused if one of the man's ancestors was found to be a weaver. This shows that marginalizing some occupational groups was not limited to one ethnic group. Rather, it was culturally common across the different regions and ethnic groups in Ethiopia. There was, in fact, already a process of marginalization of artisans among settlers from other ethnic groups in Addis Ababa before the Gamo weavers moved to the urban areas.

On settling in Addis Ababa, the early Gamo weavers faced marginalization due to the widespread cultural beliefs that despised artisans. Yet they came to Addis Ababa, in part, to practice what was

seen in countryside as a fairly high-status occupation – weaving. Recounting the stories his forefathers told him, a 72-year-old ex-weaver (key informant) revealed that some people marginalized weavers because of some mythical belief systems (interview notes, Addis Ababa: 6-10-2016). These people believed that weavers had a spirit called '*Ayine tila'*. They believed that *Ayine tila* brought bad fortune and obstacles, thus making it difficult for 'infected' people to be successful in life, even if they struggled hard (Asfaw 2015: 84). My elderly informant noted that the believers thought that *Ayine tila* was contagious, so, consequently, the best way to prevent its spread was to stay away from people who were considered to possess it.

Weavers were also insulted in public places. In this context, a great Ethiopian novel writer (*Zenebe Wola* who is the son of a Gamo weaver) eloquently stated in his biography an incident in a *tej bet* in Addis Ababa in the 1960s when a local musician (*Azmari*) publically insulted his father, singing the following.

> Has a weaver a life….? As he labours half under the ground… and half above the ground? (Wola 2001: 284).

There were, however, a few attempts made by the imperial government to reverse the widespread marginalization of weavers. For instance, Emperor Menilik II passed a decree in 1908 that stated:

> Let those who insult the worker on account of his labour cease to do so. Until this time, those who weaved the *shemma*….you insulted on account of his trade. Discrimination is the result of ignorance. Hereafter anyone who insults these is insulting me…..and will be punished by a year imprisonment (Mahteme Selassie 1942, cited in Burley, 1978: 147).

However, not very much changed until the 1974 revolution. The limited integration of Gamo weavers with other urban dwellers turned weaving into a closed occupation of the Gamo people in Addis Ababa, with the exception of a relatively small number of weavers from other ethnic groups. The marginalization of weavers led to a geographic segregation, with weavers' workplaces being concentrated in specific

locations, thus demonstrating how the creation of places is influenced by social, economic and physical realities (Easthope 2004).

After leaving the centre of Addis Ababa, the first place where the weavers settled was Mahal Sefer (in front of the American Embassy at Shiro Meda) (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). As their population grew, space became scarce so they moved and settled further to the north of the city. This settlement pattern continued for decades and currently several thousand Gamo weavers' enterprises are located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, in places such as Alem Gena, Welete, Burayu, Entoto Mariam, and Ankorcha.

## 4.5 Childhoods of the imperial period: Invisible childhoods

There is a paucity of recorded historical data and ethnographic accounts regarding the lives of Gamo children during the imperial era. This is likewise the case in many other Ethiopian societies, with little being known about the history of childhoods and children's problems since the medieval period (Kaplan 1997: 540). Very few child-focused studies are available, and those studies tend to be limited to children's development and the variations in weight and height among children living in various agro-ecological zones (for example, Clegg et al 1972, Pawson 1977). Globally, the measurements of height and weight related to age came from the fields of health sciences and developmental psychology as a means of defining healthy growth in children based on specific biomedical and psycho-social stages (Cregan & Cutbert 2014: 11). Therefore, the few available studies on the height and weight of Ethiopian children were shaped by the Global North's developmentalist[10] approach to children in the 20th century. Apart from these studies, little has been studied about the socioeconomic conditions of children. In fact, annotated bibliographies on Ethiopia in general and its childhoods in particular, do not include a single study conducted on the social and economic aspects of children in the pre-1974 period (see for e.g., Ofcansky 2005, Poluha 2004, and CODESRIA 2010). In particular, literature on female children was absent. Pankhurst stated:

> Early historical data on Ethiopian childhoods is so scant that it is almost as though they were neither seen nor heard. Much of the Ethiopian history is political, about the nobilities and emperors, written by their chroniclers. This history overlooks elementary units of the society like households and their members (Pankhurst 1991: 3).

For most of the imperial period, children were invisible to the laws of the country. The issue of children was, for instance, totally absent in the 1931 and 1955 constitutions. No law prohibited children's engagement in work. Interestingly, the 1955 constitution gave a right to all Ethiopians - with no age limit - to work in any field they wanted. The constitution stated:

> Every Ethiopian subject has the right to engage in any occupation, to form or join any occupational associations in accordance with the law (Ethiopian Empire 1955: Article 47)

At that time, there was no labour law which specified what type of work was allowed to be carried out by children and adults. The only labour related-law that addressed children as a social group was a proclamation to abolish slavery in 1923. The law declared the freedom of child slaves who were born after 1924 (Allain 2006: 230). This law was passed mainly to convince the western colonial powers that Ethiopia was indeed a 'civilized nation' - an important criterion to becoming a member of the League of Nations - and thereby able to maintain its independence. Nonetheless, as in many cases, child slaves who were already born were lumped together as 'descendants of slaves' instead of as children (see for example, Ofcansky & Berry 1993: 33).

In terms of social policy, the issue of abandoned children was for the first time included in the country's civil code in 1960. Child protection mechanisms for children without family support were outlined. Aside from orphanages, both international and local adoptions were among the strategies in place (Beckstrom 1972). By implementing a policy allowing international adoption, however, there was a fear among law makers and enforcers (mainly judges) that the country would be despised for being so poor that it could not take care of its own children (ibid: 162).

In terms of their education, many children attended a traditional church-based school which had been under the auspices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for over a thousand years (Kebede 2006: 6-10). This education was based on the spiritual kinship relations of adults and children (Kaplan 1997: 552). However, despite a rich legacy of church-based education and a possession of its own unique alphabet, most of Ethiopia's population remained illiterate. Church education was mostly limited to the central and northern highlands of the country because of the church's historical affiliation in those regions. It was usually boys and young people (from the age of four) from these areas who had access to church education. One study reported that throughout the country there were an estimated 520,000 children attending church education in 1950 (Ofcansky & Berry 1993). This figure was about nine times higher than the number of children who were enrolled in non-church primary schools at the same period. Several children from Muslim communities had religious education as well. However, religious education was usually based on the transmission of the beliefs, values and practices of the religion, and thereby reproducing the ideas of the clergy rather than bringing about social change in the country.

Apart from church schools, the main source of education for most of the children in Ethiopian societies was based on folk tales, poems, songs, and short stories. These educational methods facilitated the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, tradition and societal values. In addition, work and punishment were considered to be important educational methods in many Ethiopian societies (Kaplan 1997). These were, in particular, used as a way to discipline a child. For instance, the phrase *teqontito yadege* (literally: pinched during childhood) means that the person was disciplined as a child. Furthermore, insults such as *asadagi yebedelew* (spoiled by a guardian) or *sid adeg* (undisciplined during childhood) imply a laissez-faire parenting style with little punishment. These popular and ubiquitous terms are used to justify the importance of disciplining a child through a punishment. With regards to

work, from the medieval period onwards, many Ethiopian children of both gender (starting from age four) were required to engage in some form of work in order to learn the skills they needed for their daily life (ibid: 550).

Western education is a relatively recent phenomenon that was introduced in the early 20th century with the opening of the first state school in 1908, and European mission schools in a few towns and cities afterwards. In total, the pre-1970 Ethiopian state ran less than 500 schools (including primary, secondary and colleges) throughout the country. In imperial Ethiopia, only a few thousand children received modern education. One study reported that in 1952, of the country's 18 million people, only 60,000 were enrolled in the existing schools - 400 primary schools, 11 secondary schools, and only one University College (Ofcansky & Berry 1993: 126). This was far below the numbers is most sub-Saharan African countries that were at that time ruled by colonial powers. One study reported:

> The average enrolment in primary schools on the African continent was estimated at over 40% in 1961. Whereas the estimated primary school enrolment in Ethiopia was at 3.8 % for the same year. On the secondary level, estimated average enrolment for the appropriate age group on the continent and in Ethiopia was 3.5 and 0.5% respectively (Balsvik 1979: 6-7).

Consequently, the literacy rate was one of the lowest in the world, with only 7% of the total population being able to read and write (Wodajo 1969: 232). Such a low literacy rate embarrassed Ethiopian officials during a UNESCO-sponsored international conference on education held in Addis Ababa in 1961 (Negash 2006: 16). This contributed to the development of the first national education policy. Despite this, by the time the imperial period was on the verge of collapse as a result of revolution, only 10% of Ethiopian children were in schools (Henze 1984: 117)

Apart from the scarcity of schools, language issues compounded the low enrolment and attendance rates of children in schools. In a country

where over 80 different languages were spoken, the medium of instruction in most of the schools was Amharic. Attending to their education was difficult for those children whose first language was not Amharic (Amare 1963: 31). The mode of education for many of these children was thus based on memorization without understanding meaning (ibid: 27). Thus, passing school exams was quite difficult for many of the non-Amharic speaking children. This was the case for rural Gamo children and others whose first language was not Amharic. The effects of childhood education in a country that followed a single language policy was profound on the life-phase transitions from childhood into adulthood, as fluency in Amharic was important for anyone wishing to work in public organizations. This affected the composition of the country's civil service. For instance, Getachew & Derib (2006: 48) reported that most of the teachers in imperial and socialist Ethiopia were Amharic speakers who did not speak the local languages in the rural areas they were sent to teach in.

Like other aspects related to Ethiopian childhoods, the scarcity of schools in the country profoundly shaped Gamo childhoods in the imperial period. One way of getting an education was to migrate from the countryside to urban areas. In particular, moving to Addis Ababa to become a weaver was an established practice. My informants (seven elderly male weavers and ex-weavers) who migrated to Addis Ababa in the years between the late 1940s and 1974, disclosed that it was considered normal for young children (from the age of 12) to travel to towns and cities. At that time, Gamo children and young people migrated either independently or accompanied by adults. Gash Kebede, a 74-year-old male ex-weaver, was one of those who came to Addis Ababa with a man, a weaver in Addis Ababa, with whom he had a fictive kinship relation (belonged in the same clan). He migrated in the early 1950s at around the age of 11. He linked his move to education – to learn weaving skills from the weaver who brought him to Addis. He called the weaver *awaki* (literally: knowledgeable). In Amharic, the term *awaki* also refers to wise adults who had accumulated more life experiences. According to

Kebede, the *awaki* were always *yehager sew* (originating from migrant weavers), and working under their guidance was an educational opportunity (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

Drawing on her rural-based ethnographic study, Judith Olmstead (1975: 97) reported that many Gamo men lived in urban centres and towns working as weavers, leaving their families in the countryside. She found that, following the men already living in urban centres, boys in Dorze villages aspired to travel to urban areas to become weavers as well. This was mainly because weavers were seen as materially more prosperous than farmers. In particular, as many weavers hired farmers to work on their farmland as casual agricultural labourers, they were viewed as relatively rich by the rest of rural Gamo society. Furthermore, Olmstead found that, in the rural markets, the estimated value of the Gamo weavers' weekly purchases in the early 1970s was about 18 times higher than that of farmers (ibid: 92). The main reason for this was that weavers had more cash than farmers as they produced for exchange–value. Likewise, Jackson (1971) reported that the cash that weavers injected into the rural markets was the main engine of the rural economy in the Gamo highlands. Consequently, driven by the relatively better social status of weavers in the countryside, combined with their greater access to the cash economy, many male Gamo children in the pre-1974 period aspired to travel to urban centres to become weavers. For several decades, migrating to the urban centres was a normal life-phase transition from childhood into young adulthood for boys.

In his autobiography about his childhood in Addis Ababa, Zenebe Wola, shared what he observed in his household in the early 1960s. He mentioned two unknown migrant Gamo boys.[11] Those young people asked his father, a weaver originally from the rural Gamo highlands, to allow them to work under his guidance (Wola 2001). Answering his father's question, the young people disclosed that they were also originally from the Gamo highlands, and had come to Addis Ababa to become weavers. Although Zenebe did not report his father's response to the young peoples' request, the story reveals that asking highly skilled

weavers to work under their roofs was normal in the pre-1974 period (see chapter 5).

Once in Addis Ababa, Gamo children's lives were characterized by full-time work in the weaving economy. Many of them did not go to school. This is verified by interviews with men who stated that they had never gone to school during their childhood in the imperial era although a few of them attained basic literacy skills as adults in the socialist Derg period. According to informal conversations in *tej bets*, due to their lower level of education, working in blue collar jobs such as security guards was common for many of the Gamo elderly (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016).

## 4.6 Gamo weavers in the socialist era (1974-1991)

Ethiopia was greatly influenced by the broader global geo-political tensions of the Cold War in the early 1970s. These geo-political tensions, combined with the internal political problems[12] of the time, contributed to the collapse of one of the oldest imperial regimes in the world. The country joined the socialist camp under the rule of an autocratic military regime called Derg that was the result of a revolution in 1974. Following its takeover, the Derg implemented several policy reforms. Three important socialist policies had a profound effect on the Gamo weavers and the weaving economy in general. These were the 1975 land reform[13], the famous public consciousness programme (*Ediget be hibret*), and the formation of handicraft cooperatives. All of these policies were fundamental in restructuring the feudal relations of production and improving the social position of artisans.

Firstly, the 1975 land reform, which came in the wake of the revolution, profoundly shifted agrarian relations of production in Ethiopia (Rahmato 1994). Initially, the state appropriated all land, taking it from landlords, and then redistributing it to individual rural households and landless people (Markakis & Ayele 1978). This greatly affected the traditional social stratification in rural societies. In particular, the land reform led to an improvement in the social position of

marginalized groups, including artisans with low socioeconomic status in Gamo society and other landless weavers, by giving them the right to land in their place of origin. Many Gamo weavers who lived in Addis Ababa also benefitted from this land reform as they were able to return to the rural Gamo highlands and claim arable land (Freeman 1999). The reform also saw a reduction in the number Gamo migrating from the countryside to Addis Ababa.

Secondly, a public consciousness raising campaign under the name of *Ediget be hibret* (literally: growing together) was another important programme that led to a reduced marginalization towards weavers. Across the country, high schools and universities were closed for two years, and teachers and students were deployed to educate rural society in socialist values that aimed to create an egalitarian (classless) society through land redistribution and the elimination of all forms of marginalization of occupational and gender groups (Freeman 1999, Markakis & Ayele 1978, Markakis 2011: 217). Old patterns of thought were rejected, cultural and religious practices (except for Orthodox Christianity and Islam) were discouraged, and marginalization of occupational groups was highly condemned (Freeman 2002). This brought about an important social change with the decline of overt marginalization of artisans in general and weavers in particular (Freeman 1999: 78, Pankhurst & Freeman 2003: 5). Increased societal awareness of human rights further contributed to the improvement of artisans' status (Pankhurst & Freeman 2003).

Thirdly, cooperatives were key instruments of the socialist Derg regime to mobilize and organize workers, farmers and public servants and thereby address their common interests. Although the first cooperatives were introduced in the late 1960s, they were very few in number, less organized and short-lived as no policy support was given to them (Daka 1978). In contrast, cooperatives during the Derg regime grew in number and used to implement socialist policies including political mobilization and distribution of resources in both rural and urban areas (Emana 2009). To reorganize handicrafts through the

establishment of cooperatives, a separate agency named Handicrafts and Small Scale Industry Development Agency (HSSIDA) was established in 1978 with duties and responsibilities outlined under proclamation 38, 1977[14] (Pankhurst & Freeman 2003: 361). In this context, several Gamo weavers established cooperatives in Addis Ababa as part of the urban cottage and handicraft industry (Daka 1978: 38). In the late 1970s, there were 437 weaving cooperatives in Ethiopia, with 49,647 weavers (members) and a total initial capital of approximately 21 million birr (ibid: 40). Of these, 157 weaving cooperatives were found in Addis Ababa. One important benefit that members of weavers' cooperatives in both rural and urban areas experienced was the supply of inputs at a subsidized price. Freeman (1999: 78) reported that many weavers' cooperatives of the 1970s in the Gamo highlands received coloured threads. In Addis Ababa, apart from input subsidy, a separate section for traditional fabrics was set up at the Shiro Meda market (Gundish Meda) at the end of the 1970s upon the request of weavers' cooperatives. Shiro Meda is located near thousands of weavers' households. Since then, it has served as the main market place for weavers' fabrics. However, the number of cooperatives, which contributed to the creation of a market for weavers, gradually declined due of internal conflicts between members, only to disappear entirely with the change of government in 1991. It was only in the late 1990s that the idea of cooperatives regained acceptance.

## 4.7 Childhoods in the socialist era: the emergence of crisis-childhood discourse

In the socialist period, the country was ravaged by civil war and recurrent drought and could no longer provide the very basic needs of its population, including children. During the famine in the 1980s in the northern parts of Ethiopia, images of starved and stunted Ethiopian children were for the first time seen on international media outlets and gained worldwide attention. In 1984, pop stars and celebrities produced a music album under the famous title of 'Do they know it is Christmas?' to

mobilize relief aid. The cover of the album juxtaposed two different groups of children - white children with musical instruments, pets and toys and stunted Ethiopian children. The Ethiopian children became an image of 'crisis childhoods'; children desperately in need of some form of life saving. Ever since that time, often filtered through the international media, Ethiopian childhood has been linked with poverty and adversities (Hoot et al 2004: 3).

In terms of social policy, Peoples Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's (PDRE) 1987 Constitution was the first to give emphasis to children. It focused on three key issues: the need for progressive compulsory education for all school-age children, the equality of children born in or out of wedlock, and the need for the state and society to pay special attention to children's upbringing so that they would love their country and have a strong commitment to 'socialism' (PDRE Constitution 1987). With this last sentiment, Ethiopian children gained the ideological interest of the socialist state, which saw inculcating socialist values into children's minds through education and socialization processes as a way of maintaining socialism.

Ethiopia's first labour law was introduced during the socialist Derg. However, it had little to do with children, as a minimum age for work was not considered a labour issue and child labour was not on the agenda of the socialist government. As a result, just as had been the case during the imperial period, children's mobility from the countryside to urban areas and their involvement in economic activities was not monitored. The socialist government's interest was instead focused on the youth. Several thousand young people were recruited, and sometimes forced, to head to war zones in northern Ethiopia to fight against rebel groups. An elderly male informant (age 78) disclosed that many young and adult Gamo weavers died on the battlefields of northern Ethiopia in the 1980s.

In terms of education, the rate of school expansion had been uniform since the 1970s, with the primary school enrolment rate increasing at a

rate of 12% per annum in the period between 1975 and 1989 (Negash 2006). In 1989, about 35% of Ethiopian children in the 7–16 age range went to school (ibid: 19). Schooling was offered under a shift system in order to maximize the number of students and use the limited school resources more efficiently.

Unlike the feudal period when Gamo children travelled to towns and cities for the sole purpose of becoming a weaver, many child migrants during the socialist period travelled to Addis Ababa to combine weaving and schooling. This was verified during my fieldwork by informal interviews with several adult weavers. All 10 semi-structured interview informants (nine males and one female) who migrated to Addis Ababa during the socialist period stated that they attended some levels of primary education. Bayu, a male weaver (age 47) is one example. He migrated to Addis Ababa in the early 1980s to go to school and to develop weaving skills under his uncle's guidance. He attended primary school up to Grade 3 when his father, a farmer, took him back to the countryside so that he could help him with farm work.

Although the importance of schooling was better recognized as a result of the public consciousness programme discussed above, the severe scarcity of schools throughout the country continued to restrain the majority of Ethiopian children from attending school. In particular, too little was done in terms of expanding school infrastructure, as much of the country's resources were wasted on the civil war. Consequently, the country's school enrolment figure remained one of the lowest in the world.

## 4.8 Gamo weavers in the post-1991 developmental state

In 1991, following several years of political unrest in Ethiopia, the socialist regime was overthrown by a rebel group – Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Several authors characterize post-1991 Ethiopia as a 'developmental state' because of the ruling government's ideological foundation (see for example, Lefort 2012,

Fantini 2013, Di Nunzio 2015, Admasie 2016: 21). The term 'developmental state' refers to the increased state intervention with a relatively efficient bureaucracy and the identification of key industrial sectors to bring about rapid economic development that resembles the economic model of some East Asian countries (Krieckhaus 2002: 1697). It has been viewed as an alternative political ideology to the neoliberal orthodoxy that promotes a 'free-market economy' through the withdrawal of the state, increased liberalization, and deregulation measures. The late prime minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi stated that in the absence of a strong interventionist state, rent-seeking elites might exploit the country's immature economy leading to a political and economic crisis and, eventually, a dead-end to the state (Melese 2006). Thus, state apparatus were increasingly consolidated to play a central role in development planning and implementation at national, regional and local levels, serving as intermediaries between the people and development actors (such as the private sector and NGOs). An indication of this increased state interventionism in the post-1991 period was the increased presence of local state apparatus through the expansion of government offices both in terms of institutional capacity/power and their sheer number (Di Nunzio 2015: 1182). Moreover, as opposed to the socialist regime, EPRDF saw the private sector as an important partner of the country's development. Nonetheless, treatment of the private sector involved a carrot-and-stick approach to promote growth-enhancing tendencies, and avoid rent-seeking behaviour (Admasie 2016: 21).

As discussed below, the role of the state in the post-1991 period that had implications for Gamo weavers and the weaving economy at large are associated with three key policies. Firstly, the production of factories for Micro and Small Enterprises as part of promoting the private sector that contributed to a restructuring in the urban weaving economy. Secondly, the introduction and intensification of anti-child labour campaigns in the weaving economy. And lastly, increased measures taken to universalize primary education, which affected labour migration from

the countryside to Addis Ababa, and brought about a significant change in Ethiopian childhoods. These are discussed in detail below.

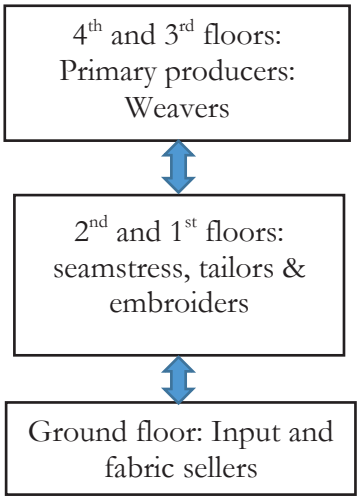
### 4.8.1 The production of factories: workplaces to promote the private sector and circumvent children's participation in weaving

As elaborated below, with the introduction of factories for adults and the relocation of weaving enterprises from homes to the newly built working premises, children were systematically excluded from working in the weaving economy. At the outset, the aim of the workplaces was to solve the problem of the lack of working premises, to improve working conditions (better ventilation and lighting, health and safety), to promote learning from one another (skill transfer), to link different producers through the value chain, to ensure a decent work environment, and to facilitate the formalization of informal enterprises and thereby promote the formal private sector (Alemayehu 2006: 12). In this context, the government used several strategies to provide various forms of support to cooperative weavers including access to credit services, provision of an improved loom (metal), and market linkages[15].

The development of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) has been a key strategy of the post-1991 Ethiopian government to promote the private sector. This has led to the crafting and implementation of various policies and strategies. For instance, the Industrial Development Strategy (IDS) that was introduced in 2003 was a core government policy to guide urban MSE development. In the IDS, MSEs are depicted as the engine of development[16], creating capital and employment opportunities (FDRE 2003: 23). In particular, the IDS underscored the expansion of specific economic MSE sectors. Specifically, it recognized the textile sub-sector which comprises various MSE operators such as weavers, tailors, embroiders, and spinners as the number one sector to promote the manufacturing economy in the country (ibid: 4). One key government strategy to support and mobilize these MSE operators (called *ankesakash*) was the construction of various types of workplaces.

In Addis Ababa, the regional government constructed 2,214 working premises[17] (using its own budget) and transferred over 2,075 MSE workplaces in the years 2004-2012 (Ali 2012: 8). Many of the workplaces granted to weavers were built in Gulele sub-city. This sub-city was chosen due to the concentration of several thousand weavers. 35 five-storey buildings were constructed to be used by textile MSEs (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016)[18]. The local government brought together different textile enterprises in one factory as part of creating a value chain[19] among different producers. This was believed to increase productivity, reduce the cost of production and improve market linkages among producers and suppliers. As shown in the figure below, the linkage between the different textile enterprises was designed to create a vertical integration in the factories in which the weavers produce their fabric on the 4th and 3rd floors, while seamstresses, tailors and embroiders add value to the fabrics working on the 2nd and 1st floors, and retailers' cooperatives (traditional cloth shops in the factories) trade the finished fabrics and inputs on the ground floor (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 24-11-2015).

*Figure 4.1: Value-chain arrangement in the new workplaces*




*Source:* author's fieldwork, 2015-16

In this value chain arrangement, weavers served as primary producers, creating the fabric through the physical transformation of inputs. The other producers mainly added value to the fabrics that had already been produced by the weavers. However, as discussed in chapter 6, this value chain arrangement did not function as per the government's plan due to intervention by intermediaries in the market.

In order to gain a better understanding of the systematic exclusion of children and young people from working in the factories, it is important to explain the two explicit prerequisites to securing a working space. Firstly, an individual could not have a permanent job. Self-employed informal workers working in home-based workplaces and willing to form cooperatives were, however, eligible to access the factories. Secondly, to be a member of a cooperative, an individual needed to have an identity card (*yekebele metawekia*) that confirmed his/her residence in Addis Ababa. To obtain an identity card from the Woreda, one needs to be at least 18 years-old. With this criterion, the 'politics of age' entered into the

organization of cooperatives and thereby the overall MSE development strategy. The minimum age condition to obtain an identity card systematically excluded young weavers below the age of 18 from forming cooperatives and securing workplaces. As Huijsmans et al. (2014) noted, chronological age is made important in particular institutional contexts like school settings where structural factors matter more than sociocultural factors constraining children's agency. Likewise, regulations that limit the minimum age to work in the factories have barred children from these places. This structural regulation, however, contravenes the generational structuring of employment in the weaving economy and the dynamic processes of becoming a weaver in urban Gamo society (discussed in chapter 5).

In total, over 2,797 adult weavers (2,668 male and 129 female) organized in cooperatives, mainly from the Gamo ethnic group, secured workplaces in Gulele sub-city, Addis Ababa (MSSEA 2016). Once weaving enterprises started working in the factories, the local government tax and revenues authority introduced rent for the workspace. These rental fees[20] were, however, subsidized as a means of promoting MSEs (KII notes[21]: Addis Ababa, 2016).

*Figure 4.2: A new workplace for weavers*

*Source:* Author's own picture, Gundish meda factory, Addis Ababa, 2016.

Despite the systematic exclusion of children from working in the factories, many children have continued to work in their respective households, receiving orders from factory-based weavers through outsourcing and sub-contracting arrangements (see chapter 6). Importantly, there is a general agreement among weavers, shop owners and government officials that the demand for weavers' fabrics has risen in the market in recent times following the transfer of the factories to textile operators (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

### 4.8.2 Market expansion of traditional clothes

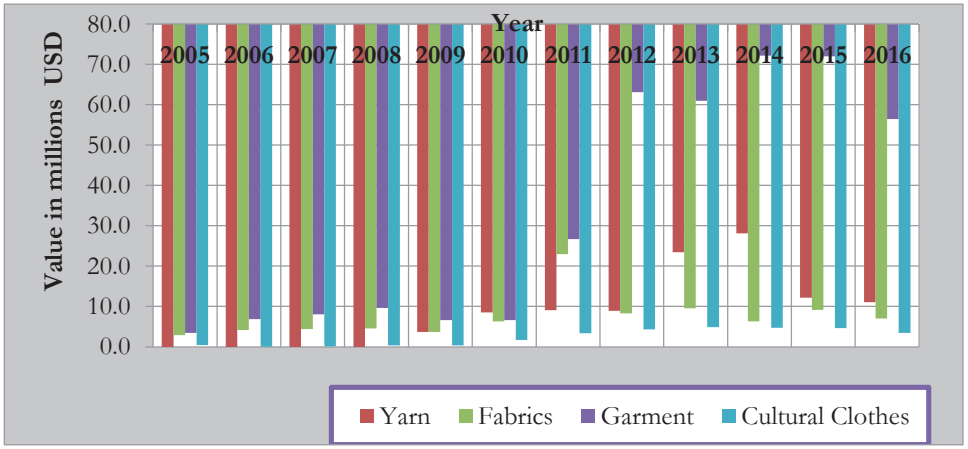
In the post-1991 period, one of the key changes in relation to the weaving economy was expansion of the market for traditional fabrics, both locally and internationally. Firstly, with regards to local markets, new shops selling traditional fabrics started opening in various geographic locations in Addis Ababa from the early 2000s. In Shiro Meda, for instance, nearly a third of the shops were small temporary container shops (called Arkebe Suk). These were introduced in 2004 by the local government as part of the government's MSE support programme. Moreover, apart from the shops in the Shiro Meda market, new shops were opened in several modern shopping malls around relatively prosperous places such as Bole and Haya Hulet – places 10-15 kms away from Shiro Meda where the price of fabrics with similar designs and inputs could be twice as high as they were in the shops in Shiro Meda and Merkato (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

In the Shiro Meda market, the beneficiaries of the MSE programme who were granted small container shops (size approximately 1.20x1.20 square meters) paid a monthly rent of approximately 300 birr (13 Euro) to the local government. By sub-letting these shops to other sellers of traditional fabrics, in 2015-2016 many shop owners earned a monthly income of 10,000-15,000 birr per month which amounted to approximately 455-682 Euro (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). For instance, a seller named Bayu (male, age approximately 35) who rented one of the container shops in front of the Gundish Meda factory,

revealed that his gross daily sales during high market seasons was up to birr 15,000 (628 Euro) – almost equivalent to the monthly rent he paid for the shop (field notes: Addis Ababa, 28-11-2015). Paying a relatively high price to sub-rent a small metallic container shop clearly shows how the sales of traditional fabrics was indeed a profitable venture for the retailers.

Secondly, with regards to the increased international market for the weaver's fabric, there is a clear indication that in the last decade the export of fabrics to Europe and North America has indeed risen through formal export channels. The recent growth in fabric exports coincides with the development of MSEs and workplace production, which has also led to the generation of foreign currency earnings from the export of traditional fabrics, something that was almost zero before 2005. As shown in the graph below, the past decade has seen a relative growth in export earnings - though this growth is marginal given the marginal status of Ethiopian textile products in the global market in comparison to some other developing countries.

*Figure 4.3: Annual foreign currency earned from exporting textile products*




*Source:* Ethiopian Revenue and Custom Authority (ERCA 2016)

As can be seen in the graph above, the export of fabric (from traditional weaving) and other textile products (from modern textile factories) started to grow in 2010, although much of the export earning

was generated from the mass production of non-traditional clothing. The foreign currency earnings from all textile products increased steadily and reached over 115 million USD in 2014 (ERCA 2016)[22]. Although this was far below the targeted 1 billion USD at the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I)[23] in 2015, the improvement cannot be denied when compared to what it was 10 years before (below 10 million USD in 2005). The contribution of traditional fabric (which was largely produced for the local market) also grew from around 416 thousand USD in 2005 to around 5 million USD in 2013/2014. Importantly, the emergence of fashion designers that combine modern and traditional dressing styles has greatly contributed to the increased export of weavers' fabrics. The increased linkages created between fashion designers, exporters and weavers, have even led to the introduction of new types of commodities for both local and export markets. Among others, table runners, scarves, curtains and napkins are new products which were unknown 15 years ago (see for example; figure 1.3).

Some of the new products, in particular scarves, are produced by child weavers. This is despite the increased campaigns against child weaving practices, discussed below, which was a new development in the weaving economy in the post-1991 period.

## 4.9 Childhoods in the developmental state: the rise of work-free childhood discourses

In contrast to the previous political-economic regimes, a new development in post-1991 Ethiopia was a rising concern with children's labour conditions. This was an extension of broader developments following the introduction of the UNCRC in 1989. The period after the adoption of the UNCRC was generally characterized by the promotion of child protection campaigns and programmes worldwide in which anti-child labour programmes became key items on agendas (Ennew et al 2005, Bourdillon et al 2010). In particular, the opening of ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child labour (IPEC) as a

global anti-child labour programme in 1992 contributed immensely to making child labour a worldwide problem, especially in the Global South.

Ethiopia is no exception here, especially after the government subscribed to the Minimum Age Convention (ILO Convention 138) in 1999 and processed it in the 2003 Labour Proclamation (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 06-09-2016)[24]. The Labour Proclamation (No. 377/2003) stipulated 14 as the minimum age for employment. This was not the case prior to 1991, when the Ethiopian Labour Proclamations did not include a minimum employment age. Ratification of ILO 138 has many stringent effects on a country as it is obliged to implement the Convention by law and other measures. Failure to do so may have a far-reaching impact on the member state. It affects bilateral trade relations as some western countries (e.g. USA) have strict labour standards for developing countries who want to access their markets. To benefit from the duty-free export of textile products to the US market, one prerequisite that African countries have to meet is strict implementation of the ILO Minimum Age convention. Aside from this, the ILO also monitors a country's child labour status and lobbies its member states, representatives of the private sector, and multinational organizations to take measures, such as considering trade restrictions and banning exports, against those countries with labour practice problems (Nielsen 2005: 561, Bourdillon et al 2010).

The ILO Conventions on child labour are thus important policy instruments to monitor countries' progress. Member states that ratified ILO Convention 138 are, for example, required to submit regular and timely reports to the ILO on country-level child labour conditions. It was on this basis that the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency (CSA) conducted and released the first stand-alone child labour survey in 2001. The survey results showed that about 85% of Ethiopian children aged between 5 and 17 were involved in some form of productive and reproductive activities (on average, 32.8 hours per week) (CSA 2002: 41-

42). Only 38.2% of the country's child population were enrolled in schools (ibid: 43). The survey showed children's participation in agriculture, service, and manufacturing sectors. However, the extent of children's work in specific sectors was not reported.

Following the release of the survey's results, the ILO's reaction to child labour conditions in Ethiopia was critical. Presenting the findings as evidence, focusing mainly on the relatively low school enrolment rates, ILO strongly criticized officials of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in the subsequent annual meetings in Geneva (KII notes: Addis Ababa 06-09-2016). Nonetheless, despite their acceptance of ILO's criticisms and a promise to work hard on the implementation of the ILO Convention 138 and to increase labour inspection, MoLSA officials rejected CSA's survey results on the state of affairs in Ethiopia. They even wrote a letter of complaint to the Minister of Councils accusing CSA of conducting a survey that had methodological and definitional problems (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 07-09-2016)[25]. According to MoLSA officials, the CSA survey had no standard definitions of child work and labour, and the beneficial and harmful aspects of work. Indeed, the terms 'child work' and 'child labour' were missing from the operational definition of key concepts and variables in the survey. These concepts were only described in the introduction as follows:

> Child work is any work for pay or unpaid family (domestic) work, which is part of socialization process. Child work may sometimes include hazardous work. On the other hand, child labour refers to situations where children are actually doing work in industries or occupations where the child is below the established minimum age of employment which contravenes the ILO convention No. 138 and convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour. It also includes children who try to earn their living through paid employment or engage in small business activities opened by the children themselves or working for the benefit of adults who exploit them. These include those children working in hazardous work environment, in exploitative condition, work for long hours or work in activities that require intense physical effort, and work in servitude (CSA 2002: 1-2).

The survey included many controversial results and interpretations. As rightly noted by MoLSA officials, its main problem was the absence of a clear definition of detrimental and beneficial work. Of most relevance to this study, it showed that the majority of working children in Ethiopia (85.4%) had a good working relationship with their employers, whereas only 9.6% reported having a bad relationship (CSA 2002: 64). It also stated that about 89% of the children were satisfied with their work, (ibid: 69). Furthermore, it reported that working did not affect the schooling of 64% of children. Yet the survey used the term 'child labour' which is usually associated with exploitative work. As explained in chapter 2, this term is mostly utilized to refer to the detrimental nature of children's activities.

MoLSA officials claimed that the survey contributed to muddled findings, exaggerating the problem of child labour in the country. Moreover, the officials took the survey as an attack on the Ministry's reputation and mandate, as its findings subtly displayed a failure to protect children from exploitation. MoLSA's rejection of the survey findings and its accusation towards CSA created serious tensions between the officials of these two national government bodies. As a result, child labour became an issue of political contestation such that no other government-sponsored stand-alone child labour survey has been conducted in Ethiopia since. However, as discussed above, MoLSA is obliged to provide a country-level report on the status of child labour during the annual ILO meetings in Geneva. Its officials thus resort to using the findings from annual statistical abstracts on educational enrolment data produced by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to present to the ILO standing committee that oversees the Minimum Age Convention (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 07-09-2016).

The MoE reports only show annual school enrolment and dropout rates, and the progress of universalizing primary education. No statistical information is found in the reports regarding child labour status in the country. Consequently, from the years 2003 until 2008, the ILO

committee on the Minimum Age Convention sent repetitive requests to the Ethiopian government, insisting on the submission of statistical reports on child labour. The request reads as follows:

> The Ethiopian government's education report contains no information on child labour and minimum age for work figures. The committee therefore once again asks the government to provide information on the manner in which convention (ILO 138, minimum age for work) is applied in practice, including, if possible, statistical data on the number of children engaged in any form of employment or work by age group and the occupations or types of work involved, extracts from the reports of inspection services, and information on the number and nature of contraventions reported (ILO 2014/compiled report from 2003-2014).

The above request illustrates that statistical abstracts regarding education are not sufficient to show the status of child labour. Despite these repeated requests, MoLSA continued to submit educational enrolment and dropout reports, and the ILO in turn had to accept them on the assumption that increased school enrolment and reduced dropout rates indicate a reduction in the level of child labour (ILO 2017, Wells 2015: 93). A report from one of the annual ILO Committee meetings pointed out that the Ethiopian government's priority to universalizing primary education was welcomed. However, the Committee urged the government to make primary education compulsory in order to further combat child labour, thus showing that compulsory schooling can reduce children's involvement in productive activities (ILO 2006: article 2 on compulsory schooling).

In a nutshell, driven by the CSA survey and pressures from the ILO and other multilateral organizations such as UNICEF, child labour has been presented as one of the key social problems in Ethiopia. Importantly, explanations about what is a proper childhood come from institutions and organizations concerned with children's rights (Frønes 2005).

As noted above, the Ethiopian government was required to identify the key occupations and economic sectors in which child labour was widespread. Among others, the weaving economy was identified as a key sector with a serious child labour problem. Importantly, this focus on the weaving economy was in line with the government's desire to formalize the sector through enterprise development programmes and to introduce the ILO's decent work agenda. This was confirmed by a key informant[26] who mentioned the need to eliminate child labour in the workplace as one pillar of the decent work agenda[27] within the value chain programme of the weaving economy (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). To this end, as discussed below, anti-child labour campaigns and programmes that targeted child weavers in specific localities have been introduced by both state and non-state actors since the early 2000s.

### 4.9.1 Anti- child labour programmes in the weaving economy

The anti-child labour programmes in the weaving economy cannot be detached from the wider global developments discussed above that have put emphasis on the problems of child labour since the 1990s. Country-level developments following the ratification of the ILO Convention 138 and the release of the national child labour survey results in 2001 have played an important role in the promotion of anti-child labour campaigns. Initially, the ILO itself supported the first anti-child labour programme in the weaving economy in the early 2000s in Addis Ababa (ILO 2006). Alongside this, both local and international NGOs such as World Vision Ethiopia and the Mission for Community Development Programme (MCDP), started implementing their anti-child labour programmes in the weaving economy in the early 2000s. These programmes were primarily carried out in Addis Ababa and Gamo Gofa zones (south-western Ethiopia) where weaving clusters were concentrated. Government offices at different levels (from federal to local) also played an increased role in a series of awareness-raising campaigns. However, anti-child labour programmes were primarily supported by foreign aid that usually came from international NGOs. This is because government development plans prioritized other social

development programmes such as the expansion of education and health care services. A senior government official explained that the social problems that MoLSA deals with, such as begging and child labour, are considered subsidiary problems that will eventually vanish with increased economic development in the country (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Despite this, compared to previous political regimes, the current regime has given an extraordinary level of attention to the problem of child labour. This is due to the government's heavy dependence of funding from international NGOs. Among others, Save the Children, and the US Department of Labor were the key financial supporters and collaborators of anti-child labour programmes in the weaving economy (see e.g, Zegers 2013).

Examining the specific outcomes of the anti-child labour programmes is beyond the scope of this study. In general, though, I found that the global anti-child labour discourse that depicted the physical bodies of working children as victims, has played an important role in justifying programme interventions in the weaving economy.

### 4.9.2 Working children's bodies and anti-child labour discourses

> In Ethiopia, child weavers may work long hours, face physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from their employers; and develop injuries as a result of crouching while working on traditional weaving looms (US DoL 2013: 2).

The quote above, which is lifted from the United States Department of Labor's (US DoL's) annual report, is representative of international discourses on anti-child labour, focusing on children's bodies to illustrate the hazardous working conditions in the weaving economy. By emphasizing the effects of work on children's bodies, anti-child labour discourses justify the need to denounce child weaving practices. This was evident during much of my fieldwork, when I observed NGO posters posted on the walls of several houses at Shamma and Meketeya Sefer bearing the same message as the quote above (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Furthermore, leaflets and compiled stories by NGOs and government offices referred a lot about child weavers who experienced some bodily problems. The most common bodily problems mentioned

in these materials were related to sight, crouching and skin rashes. Such stories have created an image that weaving is bad for the children's physical bodies, justifying the need for some sort of child protection programme.

However, in contrast to the child labour discourses, sociocultural beliefs and practices have asserted children's embodiment of certain bodily qualities which cultivate greater weaving skills (see chapter 5). This shows how the global anti-child labour discourses are at odds with the local sociocultural attitudes that prioritize children's bodies over adults' on the ground that early engagement in weaving is key to developing weaving skills.

Similar scenarios elsewhere also demonstrate how international anti-child labour discourses on working children's bodies contradict the more localized understandings of children's bodies. Drawing on her research on working children in sub-Saharan Africa, Robson (2011: 158) illustrated how children's bodies are contested by policy-related debates and well-intentioned efforts to abolish child labour. The author contended that global child labour discourses on children's bodies are heavily influenced by western, middle class norms, which sit uneasily with local cultural values. Likewise, children are locally considered to have 'nimble fingers', enabling them to outperform adults in some activities in the carpet industry in southern Asia (see e.g, Cox 1999). In contrast, by magnifying working children's vulnerability to physical abuse and exploitation, international anti-child labour discourses working to eliminate child labour, operate against the local sociocultural attitudes towards children's bodies. This shows how the global work-free childhoods ideas portray working children's bodies as victimized (Robson 2011), with the body, either directly or indirectly, becoming an important site of programme intervention (see chapter 7).

### 4.9.3 Common buzzwords of the anti-child labour campaigns

The anti-child labour programmes that targeted child weavers have contributed to the creation and reproduction of common terms and

buzzwords in Addis Ababa. This study identified three common phrases (buzzwords) that are ubiquitous in urban society and that are also used by the mass media, and in various institutional settings such as schools and government offices: *gulbet bizbeza* (labour exploitation), y*ehitsanat hige wet ziwuwur* (child trafficking) and lastly, *ginizabe maschebet* (awareness creation).

*Gulbet bizbeza* was used in places where my fieldwork was conducted (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). In conversations with various people (including weavers, NGO workers, government officials, community workers, teachers and students), child weaving was often linked to *gulbet bizbeza*. For instance, nine adult informants (all weavers from Shamma Sefer) that I interviewed at different times used *gulbet bizbeza* when I asked them to tell me about child weaving practices (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2015/2016). Likewise, this term was quite commonly used in conversations with children and young people and teachers in school settings in reference to child weaving practices.

The second buzzword, y*ehitsanat hige wet ziwuwur* (child trafficking), mainly portrayed child weavers as victims of greedy adults who transported young people from the countryside (rural Gamo highlands) to urban centres. The purpose of bringing young people was either to use their labour-power and maximize profits or to sell them to other adults who wanted cheap labour. Informants[28] from government offices working on child protection in Gulele sub-city stated that adults usually bring children from the countryside and force them into weaving in order to make profit (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2015/16). For instance, an informant[29] (male, age approximately 55) said:

> Weaving is one of the worst work children perform in our sub-city. What makes it the worst is that adults bring children from *Geter* (countryside) to exploit their labour (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 2016).

Both local and international NGOs have reunification programmes with the intention of reintegrating those children who are believed to

have been trafficked from the countryside to the urban centres to become weavers.

The third buzzword is *ginizabe maschebet* (awareness creation) which was often used by both government officials and NGO workers. This includes a range of activities to increase society's knowledge about the side effects of work on children. A recent government report showed that the main activities carried out in 2015/16 was performing plays in Amharic and Gamogna languages in public places as a way of informing society about the hazardous working conditions for children in the weaving economy (Gulele Sub-city Labour and Social Affairs Office 2016: 3). The report called this activity its 'best practice' (*mirt temokiro*) of the year, and one that needed to be replicated by other government offices. Other awareness-creating strategies included coffee ceremonies with community members, disseminating leaflets, radio programmes, and school mini media.

Printed documents, such as booklets, reports and pamphlets, that were disseminated to the general public tell stories about child weavers. Stories of children who never went to school and who worked for over 10 hours a day were common in those materials. The stories were mainly about male child weavers (mostly aged 13 -17) who were believed to be trafficked by adults, to have experienced physical abuse, and to have been denied their right to education (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Furthermore, the documents and booklets imagined young people as '*ye wedefit hager terekabiwoch'* (the future possessors of the country), or future becomings. Weaving, in contrast, was depicted as a major obstacle constraining young people from becoming the future bearers of their country (USAID & MCDP 2015, 25-27, WCAO 2016: 3). Specifically, the importance of schooling and the dangers of weaving (affecting schooling and causing bad health, physical abuse, and psycho-social problems) were stressed in the printed documents. Furthermore, most of the stories in the booklets were accompanied by images of child weavers sitting in front of a handloom or weaving (see the pictures below).

*Figure 4.4: A pamphlet prepared by local NGO in 2015*


*Source:* picture taken from the front page of an NGO's awareness raising booklet (the Amharic text in the picture says 'child labour exploitation and trafficking'.

*Figure 4.5: Cover page of the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labour, 2012*


*Source:* picture taken from the front page of MoLSA national action plan, 2016 (the Amharic text with the picture says national plan of action to eliminate child labour).

Another form of awareness creation was NGO billboards erected in various public places, including school settings. The picture below, for instance, shows a billboard that an international NGO (Save the

Children Norway) and a local NGO (MCDP) erected in a marketplace (Shiro Meda) with an Amharic message saying, 'let us rescue children from trafficking and laborious work'.

*Figure 4.6: An NGO billboard at the Shiro Meda Market showing adults exchanging money for children*


*Source:* Author's own picture, Shiro meda market, Addis Ababa, 2016

The above billboard is representative of the images used to create awareness. As shown in the image, adults conduct business by trafficking (from rural areas where people live in huts) so that children (boys and girls) move into the world of work - a world represented in the picture by black paint. In this image, children and young people were subtly depicted as powerless and in need of rescue, as the Amharic term '*entedeg*' literally denotes the need for some kind of rescue operation. The Amharic phrase *gulbet sira* (laborious work) is used to depict economic exploitation (b*izbeza*).

Clearly, many of the awareness creation tools promoted the removal of young people from weaving, with abolition as the dominant approach towards child weaving. To this end, driven by the programmes and campaigns of both international and local NGOs, in 2011 MoLSA officially labelled weaving as a hazardous occupation for children (Pankhurst et al 2015: 107, US Department of State 2012). According to the ILO, children should not be allowed to be involved in a productive activity that is labelled hazardous (ILO 2017).

### 4.9.4 The role of chronological age in anti-child labour discourses and practices

Chronological age served as a structuring factor in the anti-child labour and enterprise development programmes in the weaving economy. It mainly served in the framing of young people as future becoming, to justify their removal from employment in both the formal and informal sectors. For instance, the ILO working standards on the minimum age for work were applied in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2014 to create 'child safe' factories. The signatories were Addis Ababa city government (represented by the Addis Ababa Labour and Social Affairs Bureau) and 60 fashion design companies[30] (members of the Ethiopian Fashion Designers Association) that sell textile products produced by weavers on the local and international market. The number one principle in the MoU stated that: 'all children under the age of 15 are prohibited from taking part in the course of production processes' (FDA 2014: 11). The age limit in the MoU is, however, above the country's official minimum age for employment - age 14 (FDRE 2004: 2475). As explained above, the role of international and local NGOs was instrumental in the prioritization of age: the signing of the MoU was facilitated by a Canada-based NGO called Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) as part of a US government-sponsored anti-child labour programme in the weaving economy called Ethiopians Fighting Against Child Labour Exploitation (E-FACE).

Anti-child labour practices were further hardened with the spatial reorganization of workplaces and the emergence of factories that led to the introduction of a standard minimum working age (18 years) in factories. As such, anti-child labour programmes have converged with the practices of enterprise development, thereby limiting young people's involvement in weaving activities. Consequently, this is slowly changing the patterns of young Gamo peoples' everyday lives and the processes of becoming a weaver, thereby reconfiguring the urban Gamo childhood.

The above discussion demonstrates how post-1991 Gamo childhoods have been shaped by the convergence of various broader global policies. In this regard, the increased globalization of the western childhood model that strongly promotes education and discourages children's involvement in productive activities is not only a global process. Rather, with the increased involvement of state and non-state actors and the reproduction of particular discourses on working children, it takes a localized form, shaping children's everyday lives in specific localities. This is more evident, as discussed below, in the government's school expansion initiatives that were inspired by the broader processes of universalizing primary education. As highlighted below, in post-1991 Ethiopia, government school expansion policies have greatly affected the long-established patterns of Gamo children's (mainly male) mobility from the countryside to urban areas, and thereby shaped their labour participation in the urban weaving economy.

## 4.10 Promoting universal primary education

In many developing countries, education policies since the 1990s have been shaped by four interrelated trends (Ansell 2017: 297). These were an increased role and influence of multilateral organizations like the World Bank, UNESCO and UNIECF, a growing belief in education as a panacea for poverty alleviation, the rise of human capital theory, and lastly, a focus on access to primary education. With the increased role of multilateral organizations in agenda-setting and financing education

programmes, a broad convergence of the discourses on education has been created, making 'access to primary education' and 'quality education' key global issues (UNICEF 2009, UNESCO 2015). Moreover, human capital theory has taken centre stage in the discourse on economic growth, with investment in education being viewed in the light of its economic returns (Ansell 2017: 300). In particular, much focus has been given to primary education as its rate of economic return for individuals, the society, and nations was found to be highest (Pyachropoulos & Patrinos 2004). In this regard, the idea of universalizing primary education has become an important global goal, and a cornerstone in shaping the education policies in many developing countries including Ethiopia.

### 4.10.1 Education policies in Ethiopia

Like many other developing countries, the idea of universalizing primary education and promoting human capital development is harmonized in Ethiopia's education policies. The two key components of Ethiopian education policies have been creating access to education (*yetimihirt tederashinet masfat*), and improving the quality of education (*yetimihirt tirat maregaget*) (MoE 2010). To achieve these, since 1995, a series of mid-term strategic plans, each with a five-year lifespan, under the name of Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) have been implemented. Consequently, several reforms have been undertaken in the education sector including changing the student-teacher ratio, improving the professional quality of teachers, introducing instruction in the mother tongue, addressing special needs education, reducing gender disparities, and, most importantly, expanding schools in rural areas.

### 4.10.2 School expansion

With a significant expansion in the number of schools since the mid-1990s, the Ethiopian education sector has undergone profound changes (Seid et al 2015: 11). The 1994 Education and Training Policy and the Education Sector Development Plans (ESDP) put extra emphasis on the construction of new schools in different regions of the country. In the

periods between 2000/01 and 2013/14, the total number of primary schools grew from 6,958 to 32,048 (UNESCO 2015: 8) and the number of secondary schools from 346 to 2,333 (National Planning Commission & UN 2015: 29). Various budgetary sources were used to finance the expenditures related to building schools. These include community contributions (ranging from 4.2% in Addis Ababa to about 9.2% in the Amhara region), cost sharing[31], and donor assistance (Orkin 2013: 7, World Bank & UNICEF 2009: 63-66). The contribution by external donors has been steadily growing: in 2014/15, about 14% of the total education budget was generated by donors (UNICEF 2016: 8). However, the government's spending can by no means be underplayed, as the share of its education budget has shown a significant increase over time. During the civil war in the 1980s, the share of the education budget was less than 4% - far smaller than the average 7% of the total annual budget in the rest of sub-Saharan African at the time. In the 2000s, however, this figure increased to over 22%, surpassing the expected 20% standard benchmark, and making Ethiopia one of the sub-Saharan African countries with the highest education expenditure in relation to its total annual budget (UNICEF 2016). Apart from expansion in higher education, much of the budget was used for the construction of new schools in rural areas. This was achieved through the increased decentralization of financial budget administration to regions and lower level administrative units -Woredas - something that had not happened under the previous political regimes (World Bank & UNICEF 2009: 66-68). Consequently, driven by increased school expansion and the abolition of school fees in 1995 (from Grade 1-10), an impressive overall growth in Net Enrolment Rates (NER) of pupils has been recorded - a growth rate which is among the most dramatic in the world (Orkin 2013: 7). In particular, the primary education NER has grown from about 20% in 1990 to 49% in 2000 and to over 90% in 2015. A UNESCO report elaborated:

> The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) for the year 2000/01 was estimated at 41.7% for girls, 55.7% for boys and 48.8% for both sexes. The corresponding data for the year 2013/14 were found to be 95.1% for

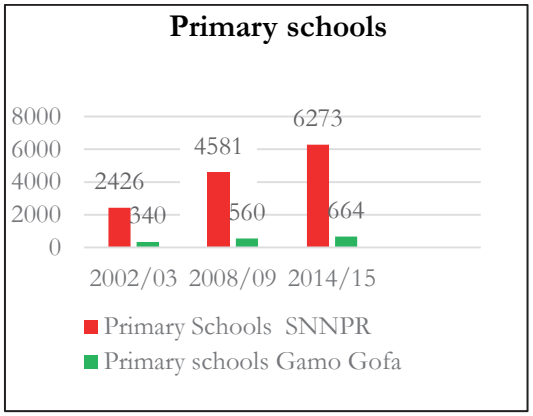
> boys, 90.1% for girls, and 92.6% for both sexes. We can observe that the NER for both sexes had shown a huge change in 2013/14 as compared to that of 2000/01 (UNESCO 2015: 9).

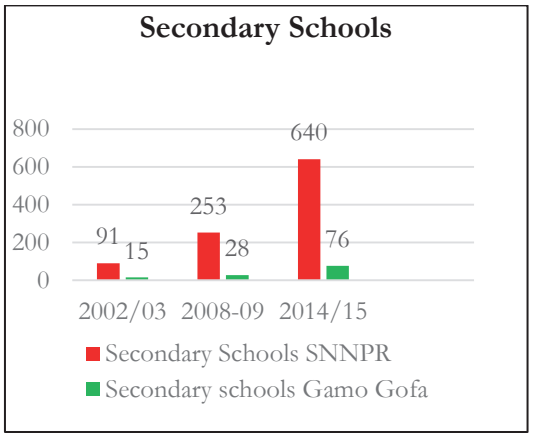
The majority of newly constructed primary and secondary schools (89%) are located in the rural areas (MoE 2010). Increased availability of schools in remote places reduces the distance young people had to walk to the nearest school. It also contributes to the reduction of migration - from the countryside to urban areas - for the sake of education. The educational aspirations of young people and their parents were a key driving force for children's mobility from rural places to urban areas (Boyden 2013: 585, Tafere 2014). Migration from rural to urban areas has also served as a means of escaping poverty in rural areas. It also served as a means to reunite with family members or relatives in urban places. However, in the face of increased rural school expansion, trends in children's mobility have recently been changing, as discussed below.

### 4.10.3 New rural schools contributing to Gamo children's reduced mobility

According to adult Gamo (ex) weavers (of both sexes) who lived in Addis Ababa, rural school expansion over the last few years has contributed to reduced migration of children and young people from the Gamo highlands to Addis Ababa. The scarcity of schools in the rural Gamo highlands was one of the driving forces for young people to migrate to Addis Ababa, contributing to the reproduction of the urban weaving economy. However, this is no longer the case, as in the last 15 years the number of both primary and secondary schools has increased more than three-fold in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) where the Gamo highlands is located. This is illustrated in the graph below.

*Figure 4.7: Annual statistical abstracts of the years 2003 and 2016 of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State of Ethiopia*




*Source:* SNNPR BoFED 2003, 2016.

However, school expansion by itself was not the only reason slowing down young people's migration to Addis Ababa. As reported by adult weavers, in line with rural school expansion, a new development was the increased role of schools and government officials in controlling children's mobility (below the age of 18). Adult informants (seven male and two female weavers) reported that, since approximately 2005, local government officials in the Gamo highlands have introduced and intensified a new mode of regulation over young people's movement in an attempt to reduce school dropout rates (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). This is in line with the country's plan to achieve universal

primary education, increase school enrolment, and reduce school dropout rates. So while children's mobility, for whatever reason, was easier in the past, this has changed recently, due to the availability of more schools and increased regulation on child migration from the countryside. Instead of travelling to other areas, children are encouraged to attend school in their original place of residence. Consequently, one prerequisite of travelling with a child has become the holding of a clearance letter (*meshegna debdabe*) from the local school. This is not easy to obtain, as school officials can refuse to provide it on the grounds of controlling school dropout rates and truancy. Gash Abayneh, (male weaver, age 70) elaborated:

> These days, young people need to hold a letter of clearance from the rural Woreda office and from their respective school in their original place to travel to other places for any purpose. This applies to those under the age of 18 (field note summaries: Addis Ababa, 12-11-2015).

Likewise, Zerihun (male weaver, age approximately 52) from Shamma Sefer elaborated:

> … There are now schools in *Chencha* making it difficult for the child to come to Addis for the sake of schooling. The child needs to hold a school clearance letter these days to leave his hometown and it is not easy to get it from school officials (field note summaries: Addis Ababa, 11-12-2015).

Reducing school dropout rates is one means of combatting the problem of child labour. As stated earlier, the ILO, for example, insisted that the Ethiopian government make primary education compulsory as a strategy to reduce school dropout rates and thereby combat child labour (ILO 2006). However, as explained in chapter 7, education by itself does not necessarily stop children from being involved in productive work. In fact, by adding more time pressure, increased school work can expose children to time poverty (see chapter 7). Primary education is not yet compulsory in Ethiopia. There is instead increased monitoring of students' attendance, with schools taking a leading role in controlling the number of dropouts. Various institutions are involved in this form of regulation, sometimes working in coordination. Importantly, schools,

traffic police offices and NGOs play a significant role. . According to adult weavers, one way of monitoring young peoples' mobility takes place at the bus stations and gates of towns like *Chencha* where traffic police always monitor the identities of passengers and the purpose of travel by children.

However, it is not only the mobility of children from the countryside to urban areas that is monitored. Monitoring also takes place the other way round - checking children (both gender) who travel to the countryside for a visit and then return to Addis Ababa. Zenebu, a woman informant (age approximately 42) from Meketeya Sefer, explained the importance of school certificates at bus stations (field notes: Addis Ababa, 28-07-2016). In the summer of 2016, when she come back from visiting her relatives in the village of *Dokko,* I asked her why her son Amanu (Grade 9 student, weaver, age 17) was staying in Addis Ababa instead of visiting the countryside with her. She replied that even if he wanted to travel, it would not be possible as he had not received his school certificate. This illustrates the introduction of a stricter approach towards children's movements and thus a difficulty faced by Gamo children living in both the countryside and Addis Ababa. It also indexes a constriction of the ideas about appropriate places for children (Holloway & Valentine 2000).

These strict measures have affected the long-established social support mechanisms among the Gamo people living in rural and urban areas. According to adult weavers living in Addis Ababa, the blanket measures to restrict young people's mobility are problematic because they mean that they cannot travel with their children and relatives anytime they want. Customarily, Gamo families live apart as several male weavers stay in Addis Ababa while the rest of their family lives in the rural Gamo highlands. Such a trend was also reported by previous studies of the Gamo people (Freeman 2002, Olmstead 1975). A Young Lives study also showed that 28% of Ethiopian children live with one family member while the others live elsewhere (Boyden 3013: 13). In such family situations, restricting young peoples' mobility not only

affects families, it also contributes to the deskilling of young people. This is particularly true of migrant children, who constitute the primary group which takes over weaving from older generation weavers in urban areas. Elderly male weavers in Addis Ababa reported this phenomenon as well.

An ex-weaver named Gash Zerihun (age 78) who lived in Shamma Sefer mentioned that, compared to some 15 years ago, very few children come to Addis Ababa to live with their relatives and cultivate weaving skills (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 22-04-2016). Likewise, Gash Lemma (male weaver, age 72) from Meketeya Sefer reported that in the last 50 years, he has trained weaving skills to over 100 Gamo children from his clan Zara at different times and they all worked for him until they become self-sufficient (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 10-10-2016). He further noted that children rarely come to him the way they used to in the past because of increased restrictions.

In a nutshell, the aforementioned discussion has demonstrated the increased difficulty Gamo children and young people have faced in post-1991 Ethiopia, following rural school expansion initiatives, and increased restriction on children's movements to reduce school dropout rates. These developments converge with enterprise development and the anti-child labour programmes explained earlier. The combined effects of these three globally inspired and locally executed policies have increasingly constrained young peoples' participation in weaving activities. Consequently, the workings of these policies, including the age-based criteria to limit children from work, are at odds with the sociocultural practices of the urban Gamo in their localities (see the next chapter). By demonstrating the limitations of developing weaving skills as an adult, the next chapter will show the importance of early engagement in weaving activities - as a child – in order to become a well-established weaver.

## 4.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided a historical analysis on the changes and continuities in the urban weaving economy and in childhoods. It

demonstrated how childhoods in Ethiopia are a product of many interacting broader processes of change in specific politico-historical periods. The findings clearly show how the local Ethiopian childhoods have converged with the broader development processes transforming the discourses of childhoods. In Ethiopia's politics, economy, and development discourses, childhoods were to a large extent invisible in the pre-1974 period. However, the civil war of the post-1974 period, compounded by a recurrent drought and famine, contributed to the emergence of the dominant 'crisis-childhoods' discourse. In the post-1991 developmental state, with the promotion of the private sector, ratification of the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, the 2001 child labour survey, and campaigns for universal education, the course of crisis childhoods once again expanded to include what is referred as 'work-free childhoods'. Many international and local NGOs and the government started to implement anti-child labour programmes and campaigns.

Importantly, African childhoods are similarly depicted in light of a discourse on crisis (Robson 2004b), and in relation to work-free childhoods (Abebe & Bessell 2011, Bourdillon 2015, Aufseeser 2018). However, the work-free childhood is a Eurocentric and middle class perspective that overlooks the cultural and socioeconomic contexts in the Global South (Balagopalan 2014, Bourdillon 2006, Nieuwenhuys 1996). As discussed in the next chapter, anti-child labour and enterprise development policies and programmes are at odds with the processes of becoming a weaver, mainly because a particular life-phase in childhood is foundational to cultivating greater weaving skills.

## Notes

[1] This territorial expansion was undertaken by Emperor Menilik II as part of a confrontation of the local power bases in various areas and as a means of creating a strong central government. It involved a series of marches towards southern Ethiopia that led to the formation of what is the current modern state of Ethiopia (Young 1998).

[2] This historical information contrasts, however, reports by earlier scholars such as Burley (1978) and Olmstead (1975) who stated that the first Gamo settlers in

Addis Ababa were slaves that were brought forcefully from south-western Ethiopia. Neither of these authors produced empirical evidence to support their conclusion. Furthermore, it seems that their work on the history of the Gamo people was influenced by a neocolonial perspective - looking at Emperor Menilik II's march to southern Ethiopia as part of the colonization processes in the 19th and 20th centuries. Ethiopian history during Emperor Menilik's reign is contested insofar as various scholarly works have different interpretations. As such, Burley's and Olmstead's work needs to be reassessed with historical fact - with firm empirical evidence – something which is beyond the scope of my research.

[3] Dorze is the name of one of the early settler clans of the Gamo ethnic group in Addis Ababa. Due to this, later Gamo settlers who spoke the same language as the Dorze people were also called Dorze by the other urban inhabitants.

[4] There are around 40 different clans in the Gamo ethnic group. They all speak the same language, Gamogna, but they are considered to be clans because they are organized under different patrilineal families and live in different localities in the Gamo highlands (Freeman 1999: 57).

[5] This is related to an underdeveloped capitalist economy which is characterized by unequal development in which different social formations and modes of production co-exist in society while transition to a modern capitalist system is taking place (Amin 1978).

[6] There was a national currency since 1896 but this was primarily used as a means of asserting the political independence of the Ethiopian empire and was not widely circulated or used throughout the country (Pankhurst 1968:491).

[7] The first road to link the town of Arba Minch to Addis Ababa was built in the 1960s (Olmstead 1973: 232). This fundamentally changed the travel time from the Gamo highlands to Addis Ababa from several days to one single day.

[8] In fact, weaving could not disappear completely with the emergence of Western-style dress because the Ethiopian weavers' fabrics were complementary to rather than a substitute for modern fabrics (Krasten 1972). This was because some of the fabrics they wove could easily be used for modern clothing. For instance, a rather common style was wearing a modern outfit with a shawl or gabi made by the weavers over the top.

[9] Freeman (1999) reclassified this into three groups, with the addition of the descendants of slaves (named *Ayle*) as a middle class in between the *Mala* and T*s'omma*. She further sub-categorized the T*s'omma* (artisans) into two sub-categories - potters (*Mana)* and tanners (*Degala*) with the *Degala* being the most despised group in rural Gamo society (ibid: 58).

[10] The developmentalist approach comes from the developmentalism school of thought in psychology that emphasizes the child's mind and body and the

processes of change in becoming an adult. It is mainly associated with the works of Jean Piaget in the 1960s and 70s (Cregan & Cutbert 2014: 10).

[11] Their age was not specified.

[12] The internal political problems at the advent of the 1974 revolution were, amongst others, mainly driven by an urban popular uprising by young people, asking fundamental questions about land tenure issues under the slogan 'land to the tiller'.

[13] Land proclamation No. 31/1975.

[14] Negarit Gazeta, No. 124/1977: Proclamation to establish Handicrafts and Small-Scale Industries Development Agency.

[15] For instance, exhibitions were organized in public places to promote the products made by MSEs and, government offices ordered weavers to supply their fabrics in bulk for some festivals (Chamber of Commerce, 2015).

[16] The government introduced the first MSE development strategy in 1997 - before the IDS. MSE development was part of a national plan to create employment opportunities for the youth in the short-run and to achieve industrialization in the long-run. However, it was only after the IDS that more reforms were undertaken on the ground, including the construction of workplaces and the increased access to credit services after 2004. The MSE strategy was revised in 2011 to include the increasing number of college and university graduates (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016)

[17] According to the head of the Addis Ababa workplace administration agency, the growing numbers of workplaces and MSEs working in these new workplaces led the Addis Ababa city government to set up a separate agency in 2015 that oversees workplace administration (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 06-08-2016). This new agency constructs and administers various types of workplaces for use by MSEs. It works closely with the Addis Ababa Micro and Small Scale Enterprises Bureau and manages workplaces, renovates factories, and ensures the provision of basic facilities such as water and electricity. The workplaces differ in size and set-up. They include workshops (locally called*Sheds*) for MSE operators in the areas of mechanics, cobblestone work, and wood work; and five-storey buildings (called *Maekel*) used by those in the textile and leather processing sub-sectors.

[18] Official from Gulele sub city Micro and Small scale Enterprises office.

[19] Value chain refers to a set of activities in a specific economic sector (industry) in which different enterprises participate in order to deliver a valuable product or service for the market (Porter 1985). It also includes a process view of production in enterprises, looking at a manufacturing (or service) organization as a whole system which is made up of different subsystems that includes inputs, production

processes, outputs and consumption. Resources like labour, materials, equipment, money, management, and working spaces are important components of a value chain.

[20] According to the head of the Gundish Meda site, the monthly rent weavers reported paying was birr 72 (approximately 3.30 Euros).

[21] Head of the workplace administration office.

[22] As shown in the graph, there was, nonetheless an overall decline of foreign currency earnings from the textile sub-sector in the years 2015/2016 due to drought that destroyed cotton production in the agricultural sector, and a lack of electric energy (KII note: Addis Ababa, 2016).

[23] Taking this as an overambitious plan, the government reduced the expected export earnings from the textile sub-sector to 779 million USD in the 2nd Growth and Transformation Plan of 2016-2020 (GTP II, 2016: 138). The establishment of workplaces through the construction of several industrial zones and parks in various regions of the country has taken place in the last couple of years, in particular for textile sub-sector. These industrial workplaces, constructed by the federal government, are expected to cater to both local and foreign manufacturing companies. However, the developments in the larger industrial parks and modern textile sector are beyond the scope of the study. The interest in this study lies in the workplaces constructed by regional governments specifically to serve local MSEs, particularly weaving enterprises, and the workplace restructuring and labour changes brought about as a result of this.

[24] Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, policy maker at the labour relations Directorate (female, age 42).

[25] Senior government official (male, age 58) Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Labour relations Directorate.

[26] Head of workplaces administration.

[27] This is one of the ILO's famous working standards that is implemented worldwide on the grounds of protecting workers from precarious working conditions and ensuring their safety in the workplace (ILO 2017).

[28] These were five officials from concerned government offices and four NGO experts. The government officials were the head of the Women and Children's Affairs office, Woreda 01, Gulele Sub-city, two experts (a process owner and a senior expert) from the Child Rights and Protection unit of Gulele Sub city, one official (process owner) from the Labour Affairs unit at the Gulele Sub-city, and one official (the head of the Child Rights and Protection unit) from Addis Ababa's Women and Children Affairs office. The NGO workers were two

officials (a programme manager and a child protection officer) from a local NGO called Mission for Community Development Programme (MCDP), and two officials (a child protection officer and a Livelihoods programme manager) from an international NGO called World Vision Ethiopia.

[29]Head of Gulele Sub-city, Women and Child Rights and Protection office.

[30] These companies primarily use the semi-finished fabrics weavers produced as an input.

[31] This is a means of generating income, in which all students in Grade 11 and above share the cost of education (World Bank & UNICEF 2009: 64). Under this arrangement, students are obliged to pay for the cost of education within six months of starting to earn an income.

# 5 Becoming a weaver

## 5.1 Introduction

By emphasizing the everyday practices of Gamo children in the home-based workplace, this chapter provides an analysis of the dynamics of becoming a weaver in urban Gamo society. The chapter gives a response to the second main research question: How and in what ways do Gamo children cultivate weaving skills in the home and why do homes serve as sites of learning and work? What alternative means of developing weaving skills exist, and to what extent are these successful in producing competent weavers? As will be demonstrated in this chapter, engagement in weaving during a particular life-phase in childhood (roughly in between the ages of 11 to 16), is key to cultivating greater skills. This is mainly because, compared to adults, children in this life-phase are believed to have the bodily qualities as well as the appropriate physical size to easily internalize weaving skills. Accordingly, this chapter argues that the global work-free childhoods discourse that aims to eliminate child labour from the weaving economy is reductionist insofar as it overlooks the localized standards and sociocultural understandings of childhoods and work in urban Gamo society.

In this chapter, I employ a Vygotskian-inspired sociocultural analysis to show how cultural variations matter in children's development processes, and how the sociocultural environment in which children live is central to learning and to their everyday lives (Vygotsky 1978, John-Steiner & Mahn 1996). The chapter is critical of the other method of developing weaving skills which is organized for adults through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes. As explained in this chapter, the TVET programme is, by-and-large, a failure, contributing to the production of less competent weavers.

Importantly, in the explanation of children's learning-by-doing practices, homes serve as key places for children to develop weaving skills. Nonetheless, as discussed in chapter 4, the informal learning-by-doing weaving practices in home settings have been targeted by campaigns against child labour (in both urban and rural areas) that depicted child weavers as powerless and in need of rescue. In many cases, child weavers working in the home are viewed as victims of greedy adults who want to exploit their labour. The child labour and trafficking discourses are, however, rather simplistic and reductionist, and overlook the sociocultural context, and localized practices and expectations that consider the importance of children's physical bodies over adults' to cultivate weaving skills using the learning-by-doing method explained below. Without considering the sociocultural factors or understanding children's perspectives, weaving is labelled by both state and non-state actors as a hazardous occupation for children (Pankhurst et al 2015: 107, US Department of State 2012). Against the background of the work-free childhood discourse, this chapter claims that children's involvement in weaving in the home setting is more of a sociological and cultural phenomenon than a social problem. As such, the chapter critically questions the official labelling of weaving as a hazardous occupation for children.

Furthermore, as elaborated in the chapter, through their engagement in weaving practices, Gamo children have demonstrated an active role in mobilizing relationship networks based on (fictive) kinship relations. Young peoples' involvement in weaving practices is either adult or child-initiated. In both cases, however, children have exercised their agency in learning key skills, whilst at the same time contributing to their respective household economies.

The chapter is organized into the following sub-sections: the home as a place to cultivate weaving skills, the learning-by-doing system, reasons for children's involvement in weaving, the key processes of becoming a weaver, the system of learning how to weave, the relevance of childhood

to cultivating greater weaving skills, and an alternative training programme through the TVET system.

## 5.2 The home: places of learning-by-doing

In this research, home is understood as a 'place' that has a considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for children (Easthope 2004: 135). Furthermore, following the work of Rasmussen (2004), I consider the home-based workplaces as 'children's places' as working children live in and around these localities, identify with them, and talked a lot about them during our conversations. For urban Gamo children, their homes are both like school settings where they cultivate weaving skills, and working spaces where they produce valuable fabrics. This is clearly demonstrated in empirical findings that show that most learning-by-doing practices take place in home settings where families live. This is the case for both migrant children who work within the extended family environment, and for those who were born in Addis and stay with their parents. As demonstrated in table 5.1 below, belonging to a particular clan of the Gamo ethnic group, usually under the family or extended family system, or in the form of fictive kinship relations, is the most important criterion to living in weavers' home-based workplaces and cultivating weaving skills. Importantly, this arrangement of learning-by-doing under the roof of an established weaver has contributed to the naming of several villages that have clustered homes around Shiro Meda, after the clan names of earlier settler *tibebegna* (creative) weavers (field notes, Addis Ababa: 06-09-2016). For instance, in Gulele sub-city Woreda 01, I discovered that three villages, Shamma Sefer, Webera Gibi, and Zute Sefer, have clan-based names with the early settler-weavers and many of the descendants of younger generation belonging to those clans (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Likewise, in the same sub-city Woreda 06, two of the villages, Sula Sefer and Zara Sefer, have clan-based names of the early Gamo settler-weavers. Such settlement patterns suggest that, through their active involvement in the learning-by-doing system within

home setting, Gamo children have contributed to the continuation of older practices and the social order.

This fits very well with what Corsaro (1993: 3) termed 'reproductive development' in his work on interpretive reproduction, arguing that childhood development processes are reproductive rather than linear stages of socialization. Reproductive development, in this case, includes an individualized process in which each child develops personally, but is also a collective process in which children as peer groups use, develop and reproduce the cultural practices and resources created by previous generations (Gaskins et al 1992: 6). Importantly, as discussed in chapter 6, this collective development component is interdependent with social reproduction patterns (Corsaro 2012: 709).

## 5.3 The learning-by-doing system in the weaving economy

As explained in chapter 2, the phrase 'learning process' does not fully capture childhood experiences and engagements in the process of becoming a weaver in urban Gamo culture. Rather, as discovered through participant observation, developing weaving skills involves relational and interdependent learning and doing (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). This is not, however, the case for child practitioners only. Adult weavers also continue to develop extra skills such as making new designs (*tibebs*) with the assistance of more experienced weavers. Changes in fashion designs in the market, and the dynamic nature of the weaving economy associated with the introduction of new products and patterns, made it necessary for adult weavers to update their skills through continued learning-by-doing practices. Learning and doing are thus understood as interdependent in the case of weaving.

In the following table, I illustrate the workings of the learning-by-doing system in the urban weaving economy and how, through this system, the cultural practice of weaving has been reproduced over several generations of Gamo people in Addis Ababa and beyond.

*Table 5.1: Story of an elderly weaver*

**Gash Lemma**

Gash Lemma, an 83-year-old male Gamo weaver is one of the settlers in Addis Ababa, in a locality named 23 Kebele. He came to Addis Ababa at a young age (aged 13) by himself searching for a better life. Under the guidance of an earlier Gamo settler, his uncle, Gash Lemma developed weaving skills and became an established weaver. After about four years of working for his uncle, he left his uncle's workplace at the age of 18 and started working for himself. He then occupied a forest area near Shiro Meda and built two houses. In the subsequent years, he got married in his place of origin and started a family in the countryside while spending most of his time in Addis Ababa. Over the next few years, dozens of boys from his clan (Zara) came and practiced weaving under his guidance. These young people would come to him in one of two different ways. Firstly, many of them (usually male and aged 10-15) came along with him when he returned from visiting his place of origin in the rural Gamo highlands for the *Meskella* holiday and to cultivate his plot of land (inherited from his father). These young people would either come at their families' request or on their own insistence. Secondly, several of those who heard about him in the countryside came to his home in Addis, knocked on the door and asked, 'Is this Mr. Lemma's home? I am from the Zara clan; I want to stay with you to learn city life and to develop weaving skills.' Gash Lemma would usually allow these young rural people into his home. In exchange for his weaving guidance, and for the shelter and food he provided, he benefited from their labour time and the value they contributed in the production of fabrics. As such, the process of cultivating weaving skills was usually based on mutual benefits for both the young people and for Gash Lemma. Normally, working under the guidance of Gash Lemma continued for a few years until the young weavers become independent - always at the end of late adolescence. In this way, for more than 60 years of Gash Lemma's life as a weaver, over 100 young Gamo had developed weaving skills under his guidance, living and working in his house - a home-based workplace. With the exception of two of his sons and a few nephews, most of these young people were not related to Gash Lemma by blood. In spite of this, Gash Lemma claimed that all the Zara people living in the rural area are his relatives. According to one of his sons (age approximately 45) who is a full time weaver, Gash Lemma is an 'ambassador' for the Zara people in the countryside. The local people call the village where Gash Lemma's house is located '*Zara sefer',* using his clan name as it has always been the Zara who lived there and became weavers following in Gash Lemma's footsteps (field note summaries: Addis Ababa, 06-09-2016).

The above story says a lot about the career paths of several generations of Gamo weavers with (fictive) kinship descent, in particular their choice to migrate from the countryside to become weavers in urban areas. In the case described above, three main generations of Gamo weavers can be identified. The first generation was Gash Lemma's uncle who lived in Addis Ababa in the 1940s and guided Gash Lemma in becoming a weaver. The second generation, to which Gash Lemma belongs, migrated to Addis Ababa at the end of the 1940s at a young age. The third generation is Gash Lemma's sons and the young people from his Zara clan who lived under his roof developing weaving skills. Many of the children and young people, as shown in the table, were male migrants from the countryside, indicating that migrating to urban areas for the sake of becoming a weaver has long been an established intergenerational pattern for male Gamo children within the learning-by-doing system. It also shows that involvement in the learning-by-doing practice is not solely dictated by older generation male weavers. Instead, several of the boys mobilized relations of relatedness (based on clan, ethnicity, and kinship) and used their already existing networks and information to become weavers. As such, they had active roles with purposeful engagement in migration and forming social relations to become weavers in Addis Ababa.

Nonetheless, to better understand how the learning-by-doing system has persisted across generations, and how the weaving economy has been reproduced so far, it is useful to examine the underlying reasons behind Gamo children's involvement in weaving practices. The subsequent section provides this analysis.

## 5.4 Why do Gamo children weave?

In sociocultural analysis, childhood learning experiences are shaped by ethnicity, gender, culture (social norms and values), socioeconomic status, peer groups, media, parents and traumatic events (Bourdillon 2006: 1202). In Ethiopia, a number of factors have contributed to

children's involvement in work. A significant push factor that is often cited is chronic poverty (CSA 2002, Kifle 2002, Sorsa & Abera 2006, PIN 2009, Morrow et al 2017). Furthermore, a lack of access to basic social services such as education is also seen as driving forces of child labour (Sorsa & Abera 2006). One of the reasons for children to engage in productive activities is to increase family income (Boyden 2009). However, Cockburn & Dostie (2007) argued that poverty cannot necessarily be the major reason for children to engage in productive activities. The authors found that household assets and family composition are determinants of the level of child labour: a household with a large number of cattle and a relatively large piece of land tend to utilize more child labour. In a similar vein, Heissler & Porter (2013) reported that poverty is not the main factor for children's work in Ethiopia. The authors stated that participation in work is largely shaped by the age and gender composition of households. Child migration and trafficking between major towns and urban areas is another factor reinforcing children's participation in different activities (Kifle 2002, PIN 2009, Zegers 2013).

Woldehanna et al (2008) provided an all-embracing analysis, classifying the causes of Ethiopian children's involvement in work into four categories: child-level factors, household-level factors, community-level factors, and policy-level factors. In terms of the child-level factors, the authors showed that, in relation to their family's poverty status, children felt a duty to help, even at the expense of their education. Household-level factors included parental education, family assets, the family's social capital, and the wealth/poverty status of the household. In terms of community-level factors, the authors found that proximity to school was a significant factor related to increased child labour. As the distance to school increases, children find it more difficult to combine work with schooling, thus adversely affecting the decision of whether to send children to school or not (ibid). This factor has a strong association with the child's sex due to safety concerns. The further away schools are, the more families prevent girls from going to school to protect them

from sexual assault and abduction. This, in turn, intensifies the involvement of girls in productive and reproductive activities. Lastly, the authors showed how policy-level factors also play an important role in reducing or increasing the number of working children, as poverty reduction strategies in Ethiopia did not consider child labour as a social problem (ibid).

There are, in fact, some studies emphasizing sociocultural contexts and showing the positive aspects of children's work for household economies in Ethiopia (see e.g., Boyden 2009, Heissler & Porter 2013, Kassa & Abebe 2016). These studies demonstrate how work has been culturally viewed as a normal day-to-day aspect of life for children in Ethiopia. Mainly, in family contexts, children's work is regarded as a process of socialization and a learning experience. Jirata & Kjørholt (2013) pointed out that in the case of *Guji* children in southern Ethiopia, work, play, and schooling are intertwined social practices through which sustainable livelihoods are acquired. Kassa & Abebe (2016) found that the cultural practice of relocating children with informal labour arrangements within the rural agricultural sector in northern Ethiopia serves as a social coping strategy for families with a labour shortage. There are also cases in which working children themselves expressed positive opinions of work (Woodhead 1999, Zeleke 2015). Woodhead (1999) reported the pride of Ethiopian children for their work, irrespective of their reservations about mistreatment and exploitation.

Based on the survey data and the interviews with children, my research shows that many of the aforementioned factors are found to be important reasons for Gamo children's involvement in weaving practices. Significantly, apart from economic reasons, social and cultural factors also serve as key underlying driving forces for children's involvement in weaving. Drawing on the survey results, the table below gives a general picture of why young Gamo people weave.

*Table 5.2: Give the reason for your involvement in weaving (only one answer)*

| No | Reason for weaving | Gamo weavers (n=66) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | Total |
| | | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) |
| 1. | To help family | 45 (71.4%) | 2 (66.7%) | 47 (71.2%) |
| 2. | To earn money | 11 (17.5%) | 0 | 11 (16.6%) |
| 3. | To stay away from wrong places | 2 (3.2%) | 1 (33.3%) | 3 (4.5%) |
| 4. | Forced to work | 2 (3.2%) | 0 | 2 (3%) |
| 5. | To learn skills | 2 (3.2%) | 0 | 2 (3%) |
| 6. | Others | 1 (1.6%) | 0 | 1 (1.5%) |
| | Total | 63 (95.4%) | 3 (4.5%) | 66 (100%) |

*Source:* author's survey with school going young people, 2016, Addis Ababa.

As can be seen in the table above, the majority of school-going Gamo weavers (71%) reported that they were involved in weaving to help their families. Furthermore, those who primarily worked to earn money constituted 17% of the weavers. However, the survey report illustrates only half of the story: the qualitative interviews and reviews of earlier anthropological studies on the cultural practices of Gamo people provides a more nuanced explanation and gives more underlying reasoning for Gamo children's involvement in weaving activities.

Moreover, the gendered aspects of weaving, which the survey could not show due to the absence of a sampling frame in the course of the data collection, were also captured through interviews (see chapter 6 on the gendered division of labour). In this context, as discovered in the qualitative research and discussed below, the main reasons for Gamo children to get involved in weaving were cultural factors (cultural values and societal norms), their socioeconomic status (parental educational and income background), a need to earn money, peer influence, family adversities, and weaving as a safety net for the future.

### 5.4.1 Cultural factors

Several studies on African working children indicate material poverty as the sole factor explaining children's involvement in productive and reproductive activities (Bass 2004, Admassie 2002, Sorsa & Abera 2006, Morrow et al 2017). However, in Ethiopia, as in many other contexts, children's involvement in different economic activities is not determined

by economic factors and the level of household poverty alone. Rather, sociocultural factors also play an important role (Kassa & Abebe 2014, Jirata & Kjørholt 2013). Similarly, for the Gamo children and young people working in the weaving economy, it is not only the level of household poverty and material deprivation that dragged them into work and reinforced their involvement but rather a range of cultural factors including, among others, the cultural value given to weaving and societal norms.

### *Cultural values*

Cultural values represent abstract ideas that are either implicit or explicit about what is good or desirable in a society and guides individuals' actions or activities (Schwartz 1999: 25), and thus shape the meaning of socially appropriate practice and respectful work in a society (Bourdieu 1977). Cultural values, in relation to types of work or particular occupations, are viewed in the light of societal beliefs regarding the superiority or inferiority of an occupation. Examining values at the cultural level rather than at the individual level is more acceptable and appropriate in order to better understand the meanings that members of the society attribute to different types of occupations (Schwartz 1999: 24). Culturally ascribed values pertaining to occupations (re)produce social status among different occupational categories, creating a social hierarchy in which some occupations are more highly valued and respected than others (Pankhurst & Freeman 2003). Viewed in this light, earlier studies on rural Gamo society reported that weaving as an economic activity has been relatively highly valued over the past several decades so that living in urban centres and doing weaving has been culturally more respected. A return to their place of origin in the countryside would elevate the social status of migrant weavers living in Addis Ababa. This is why several Gamo people were attracted to weaving and migrated to urban centres becoming weavers (see chapter 4).

### *Societal norms*

Societal norms are acceptable standards that govern individuals' behaviour in a society (Young 2007: 2). These norms play a key role in shaping the practices of social groups. Children and young people, like other social actors, tend to reproduce societal norms, a set of ideas and discourses that prevail in their society, whilst at the same time they sometimes contest and change them (Poluha 2004: 16). This is similar to William Corsaro's notion of interpretive reproduction, in which children develop both individually and collectively by reinforcing, and at the same time challenging, societal values (see chapter 2). In many African societies, to work for the family is, by-and-large, an acceptable, established societal norm for children (Bourdillon 2006). Likewise, working for the family is an established societal norm in the Ethiopian culture. This may be one reason that 85% of Ethiopian children (ages 5 to 17) were found to be involved in some form of work (CSA 2002: 42).

In Gamo society, social reciprocity is a key societal norm that has long been among the reasons for children's involvement in weaving activities. Most Gamo families residing in the countryside have at least one family member who is involved in weaving practices in urban centres (Freeman 1999: 85). This practice is continued by boys migrating from the countryside to the urban setting. Nonetheless, children's migration and mobility, which was largely considered normal in the pre-1991 period, has increasingly been problematized, and viewed in the context child trafficking in recent times (see chapter 4). Consequently, state and non-state actors have intensified campaigns in both urban areas and rural settings to limit young people's movement. Whitehead et al (2007: 2-3) pointed out that by holding particular ideologies of child-parent relations (for e.g., children have to live with their parents), international discourses usually associate child migration with poor parenting and familial dysfunction. However, little has been said about parents migrating and leaving their children behind. In fact, parent-child relations are not only shaped by intergenerational contracts, but also by intra-household dynamics that include negotiations, cooperation and

conflict (see chapter 6). Older siblings and relatives working as weavers in Addis Ababa are expected to support their families in the countryside. Among other things, this support includes bringing younger siblings or relatives in the extended family system to Addis Ababa, training them how to weave, and sending them to school. In return, the children's parents in the rural areas look after the weavers' property such as their house and farmland. Furthermore, the children are expected to work for the weavers that offer shelter and who, for a couple of years, train them how to weave. Sometimes, failure to work for the weavers would mean disrupting long-established societal norms (for details, see chapter 6 on negotiating to be an independent weaver). However, the international anti-child labour and trafficking discourses totally overlook the essence of social reciprocity among Gamo people living in the countryside and the urban centres. As a result, this study claims that the ideal of work-free childhoods is reductionist as it only emphasizes the dangers of work, failing to take into account social norms and reciprocities between children and adults of kinship decent living apart

### 5.4.2 Parental educational and occupational background

In my research, parental background in terms of educational status and occupational category were found to be contributing factors in relation to the involvement of Gamo children in weaving work. Firstly, with regards to parental education, in interviews with Gamo children, 28 of those who knew the educational status of their parents disclosed that their parents' education was, by-and-large, limited to primary education. The table below shows that of 57 parents (29 fathers who are also weavers and 28 mothers) of child weavers, only one father (adult weaver) had some secondary education (Grade 9), while the remaining 56 parents were either not educated at all or had only experienced upper or lower primary education.

*Table 5.3: Educational level of child weavers' parents*

| *No* | *Educational level* | | *Father* | *Mother* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Illiterate | | 12 | 20 |
| 2. | Basic education (reading and writing) | | 2 | - |
| 3. | Primary education | Lower level (Grade 1-4) | 8 | 4 |
| | | Upper level (Grade 5-8) | 6 | 4 |
| 4. | Secondary education | Lower level (Grade 9) | 1 | - |
| | Total | | 29 | 28 |

*Source:* author's interview notes with child weavers (generated from interviews with child weavers), Addis Ababa, 2016

Secondly, in relation to the occupational background of parents, several of the children's fathers were weavers or ex-weavers. Furthermore, 20 of the 40 fathers combined weaving with agriculture as they had farmland in the rural Gamo highlands.

### 5.4.3 Sense of responsibility

Childhood studies have shown that children, in particular those transitioning to adolescence, are responsible actors who can undertake various productive and reproductive activities for various reasons (Morrow 1994: 132). In some instances, children play a considerable role in taking care of family members and taking on household responsibilities. This is common in most developing countries. Bhaskaran et al (2011: 6) showed that 61% of child workers in Delhi garment factories worked to supplement family income and support households. Evans (2011) revealed how children in sub-Saharan African countries play an instrumental role in caring for their family members affected by chronic illness and disability. Similarly, Robson (2004b) reported how hidden child workers in Zimbabwe played a role in taking care of their HIV/AIDS affected parents and dependent adult household members. These findings are in contrast to what is seen in social policy terms, in which childhood is mainly constructed as a period of incompetence and lack of responsibility.

In the case of Ethiopia, Woldehanna et al (2008) have already indicated how a sense of responsibility serves as a key factor for children to be involved in some type of work. Likewise, the case of child weavers in my study is not so different insofar as a sense of responsibility was among the reasons the children mentioned for their involvement in weaving. For instance, as shown in the dialogue below, Temesgen (male weaver, age 16) was primarily involved in weaving because he believed that, as one gets older, one has to take responsibility:

> Question: How did you develop weaving skills and who taught you?
> Answer: Whenever I had spare time my father taught me.
> Question: You asked him or he just taught you by himself?
> Answer: Yeah, I asked him myself as I was interested in learning the skills.
> Question: Why?
> Answer: I feel it is not fair to just eat what your parents offer you when you get older. And I see my family members weaving in the house (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 08-03-2016).

Children's sense of responsibility is particularly heightened when families fall into crisis for various reasons. Family adversities and traumatic events include increased household poverty, chronic illness, and the sudden death of breadwinners. A few young people stated that they migrated from the rural area to Addis Ababa because of this. For instance, a male weaver named Chalew (age 17) said he came to Addis Ababa to live with his older brother due to his father's death (interview date: Addis Ababa, 12-06-2016). Another male weaver of the same age named Seyoum mentioned increased household poverty as a reason to leave the rural area (interview date: Addis Ababa, 06-08-2016).

One key family adversity leading some children to take up weaving to assist their households is chronic parental illness. Desta, a female weaver (age 16), said:

> ...My father never wanted me to weave - but I had to learn the skills and help him because I feel sad for him as he toils to raise us while he has a disease (asthma). He works as a security guard (porter) and after

> his daily work he comes home and weaves. This is a lot of work for him (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 04-10-2016).

Desta has three brothers – two older and one younger. One of her older brothers (age 26) is a college graduate with no weaving skills and without permanent employment. The other brother (age 27), who migrated from the countryside, was a weaver but has now started his own independent life with a family. Desta's younger sibling is aged 12 only started to weave in the summer of 2016. The young female weaver was thus in a more appropriate life-phase in terms of her skills, making her more responsible for the household than her siblings. Likewise, Abrham (male weaver, age 16) also reported that he started weaving because his father developed haemorrhoids making it difficult for him to sit long hours and weave as he used to. Abrham elaborated:

> At first I was not interested in weaving. However, as my father's health deteriorated, it was quite difficult for us to pay the rent on the house which was about 900 birr per month. My mother used to collect and sell firewood but the income she got was insufficient for the family, making her worried about fulfilling our needs. I thought that to worry would make my mother unhealthy and decided to weave (he had learned the basic skills like throwing shuttle at the age of 13). I started weaving last year in the rainy season (Kiremit) - hence I had no school work at the time. I could produce two pieces of fabric per week and the income we got from this paid the rent. My mother also covered our other expenses including my siblings' school-related costs (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 19-09-2016).

In Abrham's case, he was the only person in the household with adequate skills to weave. His younger siblings (a 14-year-old deaf boy and a 10-year-old girl) did not know how to weave.

The above two cases illustrate that a sense of responsibility to assist families is one possible reason for children and young people to take up weaving. For the youngsters described above, the deteriorating health of their family's breadwinners was a triggering factor. These cases could also show that although households might have many children, only a few of them may be engaged in weaving and thus take on more

responsibility. Other children in the family may have already started living by themselves or, if they are younger, have insufficient weaving skills to help their households. As such, family composition matters in determining children's' burden of responsibility and the process of becoming a weaver.

### 5.4.4 Weaving as a safety net for the future

Another reason for several young people to get involved in weaving was a desire to have an alternative skill that could serve as a source of income in the future. In the semi-structured interviews, 11 (four female and seven male) of the 40 participants reported that they weave because it will provide an income in the future and serve as a safety net in the absence of other income. Nonetheless, these child weavers have to find ways to combine weaving, schooling and other activities. A more elaborate discussion of this is found in chapter 7 showing children's negotiations in combining weaving and schooling.

### 5.4.5 Peer influence

Through interaction with their peers, children produce and share a set of values, artefacts, concerns and activities (Corsaro 1992: 162), and co-construct a social and moral order (Goodwin & Kyratzis 2007). Peer influence is another important reason for both male and female weavers to get involved in weaving practices. Of the 40 informant weavers, 12 (nine male and three female) mentioned that they engaged in weaving primarily because their peers in the village[1] did so (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). A few of them explained that they felt bored and alone when their friends were not around and started weaving as a way to deal with this. Eskedar (female, age 17), for instance, said that she wanted to be like her girlfriends (peers) in the village, stating that she felt excluded when her friends had something in common to talk about –their weaving work (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 23-09-2016). Likewise, Fiteum (male, age 15) said:

> Most children in our village have weaving skills. All my friends who played in a football project[2] with me could also weave. It was only me

> who did not have weaving skills. It was rather boring to sit idly or wander around the village while my friends were weaving (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 25-02-2016).

Girma (male, age 17) also elaborated:

> As for me, my father did not want me to work in weaving; but, as everyone works and since there is no one in the village who spends time with me, my friends suggested I work whenever I was alone, … Though my father did not approve of my work and insisted I should rather just stick to my school, I took up weaving. I produced only two shawls per week, claiming it could be beneficial (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 10-10-2016).

The above two quotes illustrate that young people worked despite their parents' disapproval. This is a form of agency.

### 5.4.6 Need to earn money

Another key reason for several child weavers to engage in weaving has a monetary element to it. As shown in table 1 above, 16.6% of survey respondents cited earning money as a primary reason for their involvement in weaving. Whereas several children sponsored their education through weaving, for others it covered their basic daily expenses. Furthermore, watching peers buy things with their pocket money, saving their money, or watching movies and European soccer (the English Premier League, Champions League and sometimes the Spanish League) contributed to the need to have money. Even so the need for money is not about poverty (see chapter 8).

In sum, the reasons for Gamo children to become involved in weaving are diverse. Many of the aforementioned reasons - the cultural factors (cultural values and norms), the social context including peer influence, and future aspirations move, beyond simplistic economic factors. It is because of these that the learning-by-doing system has persisted across several generations of (fictive) kinship descent. Importantly, the long-established cultural practice in urban Gamo society that has been foundational for the functioning of learning-by-doing practice is engagement in weaving at some point in childhood. Analysis

of the cultural practices of society, in particular pertaining to children's activities, provides a well-grounded understanding of childhood (James et al 1998). In the section below, I discuss how and why childhood has been a key period in which to engage in weaving activities across several generations of urban Gamo society.

## 5.5 Childhood as a key period for developing weaving skills

In urban Gamo society, *yeljinet gize* (literally: a period in childhood) is important in the development of weaving skills, although this period varies for each individual case. As the interviews showed, this is evident from the age at which young people start to engage in weaving. Several of the male weavers (16 out of 28) disclosed that they started to engage in weaving, meaning operating the loom treadle properly, at the age of 13, whilst a few (three) reported that they started learning at the age of 11. Several of the female weavers (6 out of 12), on the other hand, stated that they started weaving at the age of 16. This suggests that girls tend to start weaving at a later age. The 11 to 16 age group is thus important as it is during this life-phase that Gamo children and youth start engaging in weaving. Importantly, the age of 13 was the median age for exposure to the practice of learning-by-doing among the 40 studied participants (28 male and 12 female) (interview summaries: Addis Ababa, 2016).

This engagement in weaving at a particular age is, to a large extent, a cross-generational practice in urban Gamo society. All the male adult Gamo informants (56 weavers and ex-weavers above the age of 30) who knew their age[3] disclosed that they engaged in weaving at the age of 11 to 16 (field note summaries: Addis Ababa, 2016). A few of the older generation informants did not know their exact age - they used the terms *lijinet* (literally: childhood) or *lij eyalehu* (when I was a child) to refer to the period in their life that they were involved in learning-by-doing. These adult informants specifically mentioned early adolescence. This finding from both children and adults illustrates that a specific period in childhood is key in the Gamo culture to getting involved in learning-by-doing practices.

### 5.5.1 Why childhood matters?

According to several Gamo adult and child informants, early and mid-adolescence periods were considered appropriate times in which to engage in weaving for two main reasons: the child's physical size in terms of height, and the culturally accepted belief among adult Gamo weavers that childhood is a more appropriate period than adulthood for internalizing key traits such as agility and patience that a weaver needs. There is, however, a tension between these two factors. Because while the size factor means that children cannot start weaving until they reach a certain height, the other childhood qualities disappear as they get older. As such, the 11 to 16 age range is found to be important as children in this life-phase usually meet the height requirement and, at the same time, are seen as having the qualities necessary to internalize the key traits of a weaver.

#### *Internalization of key traits of a weaver*

Among several of the Gamo adult informants (both male and female), there is a culturally accepted belief that childhood is a more appropriate period during which to internalize the key traits of a weaver. These key traits include attachment to the weaving occupation (*lesiraw fikir masader*), patience (*tigist*), agility (*kiltifina*), and discipline (*sira makber*). Earlier studies confirm this finding, showing that the majority adult Gamo weavers (over 75% of the respondents) consider children to be quicker than adults in cultivating weaving skills (Zeleke 2015). Furthermore, one key encounter that showed me the relevance of childhood for internalizing the key traits of weaving was a visit to a home-based workplace in Shamma Sefer during which, considering my age and life stage as an adult, an elderly male weaver named Alemu (age 70) said:

> You are too old to become a well-established weaver…Even if you know how to weave, you will not be an expert; you may even end up becoming a sluggish weaver as you have already passed the appropriate period in which to cultivate weaving skills (field note summaries: Addis Ababa, 12-11-2015).

Possessing inferior weaving skills is, for many adult weavers, associated with engaging in it at a later age. A female weaver named Adanech (58-years-old) in a weaving factory (Gundish Meda) pointed out that the age of engagement in weaving creates visible skill variations among weavers (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 14-10-2016). Adanech took the evidence of herself and her colleagues (members in the same women weavers' cooperative) in the factory to show that it is quite difficult to pick up some weaving skills, in particular working with designs, at an older age. As a result, they took the training in two phases, she said. Still, these women weavers were less competent compared to the other factory weavers who had developed their weaving skills in childhood (see the discussion on the TVET below).

Such culturally accepted beliefs that see childhood as a period during which one can easily develop weaving skills is a key factor explaining children's involvement in weaving practices. Due to this, many Gamo households prefer to see younger children engaging in weaving rather than adults. For instance, a 16-years-old male weaver named Abay who migrated from the countryside at the age of 12 to engage in weaving and support his families explained:

> I was selected because I was a small boy and my brothers were older (age above 16). So my family decided that I could quickly develop the skills and easily catch up (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 07-07-2016).

According to a key informant named Demissie (ex-weaver, age approximately 45), the reason for children's ability to develop weaving skills is because they spend more time in the household than non-weaver male adults who have already started spending more time outside of the home. Weaving, by its nature, does not go well with mobile individuals of either gender who spend a lot of time outside their home. Rather, weaving requires the development of a strong habit of sitting for long hours in a workplace, making the weaver less visible in social interactions outside home. According to Demissie, while it is easy to cultivate this habit during childhood when one spends more time around the home-based workplace, adults who are not exposed to weaving during their

childhood find it quite difficult and boring (see also the TVET system below). It is easier for children as they can be controlled more easily than adult workers. Thus, children's limited mobility combined with their docility is compatible to cultivating the habit and discipline of working on fabrics for long hours in the home-based workplace. (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2015).

To provide a better picture of the nature of weavers' work, it is important to briefly reintroduce here the discussion from chapter 4 on the overt marginalization that older generation weavers faced as a result of the societal belief in the spirit of *Ayine tila*. According to this beief, the possessors of this spirit have poor social relationships and, albeit spending a lot of time working in the home, the hard work does not bring them prosperity. This view of weavers as an occupational group subtly tells an interesting story about the nature of weaving, namely that it requires staying at home, working for several hours and even days to finish a piece of fabric. Despite this, the hard work combined with reduced social interaction does not bring considerable material wealth as weavers mainly work for subsistence. As such, the nature of weaving requires a strong attachment to the occupation that leads to the formation of a specific occupational identity which can easily be developed during childhood.

Although associating weavers to *Ayine tila* belongs in the past and more to the history of an older generation of weavers, contemporary young male weavers still notice that some subtle forms of marginalization, such as labelling young male weavers as less-sociable, even calling them names, are still prevalent in Addis Ababa. Again, this name calling is related to the less mobile nature of young weavers in contrast to their peers. For example, while Abebe (male weaver, age 16) reported that *'Aboche'* is a term his peers commonly used around *Entoto Mariam village* (interview quote: Ababa, 09-09-2016), Chalew (another male weaver, age 16) also mentioned that non-weaving young people in his village (Meketeya sefer*)* called weavers *'Chura'* (interview quote: Addis Ababa 08-09-2016). According to Abebe and Chalew, both the terms

*Aboche* and *Chura* have similar meanings - they refer to boys who stay in the home with little experience and knowledge about places beyond the village. This localized practice of calling names resonates with Barbara Rogoff's idea of how teasing and shaming words serve as a means of social control (Rogoff 2003: 217). Interestingly, none of the female weavers mentioned name calling because of their occupation. This might be related to the fact that for females staying in the home is considered normal whereas for males it is not hence leading to name calling and bullying among male peer groups. Another form of bullying among male peer groups that Temesgen (male weaver, age 16) reported was the phrase '*shemanena jib kegudguad ayiwetum'* (literally: a weaver and a hyena never get out of hole) to mock weavers. This phrase implies an image of male weavers as less mobile, as staying in their workplace and not exploring places outside the local village as their non-weaving peers do (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 08-09-2016). It also presents an image of weavers working in a hole (*gudguad*), an undignified workspace with precarious working condition. This is not, however, the case for all weavers, as several of them do not work in a hole. As a way of defending themselves from such intimidating phrases and name callings, many of the male Gamo weavers that I met in school settings did not want to talk about their occupation in the presence of non-weaver peers. Thus, although marginalization in its overt form has declined (see chapter 4), there are, nonetheless, still subtle forms of marginalization of Gamo child weavers due to their fewer social interactions and less mobile nature.

However, although specific childhood qualities are important in cultivating greater weaving skills, these qualities by themselves are not enough as children also need to reach a certain height before they can start actual weaving practices.

### *Bodily quality: having an appropriate physical size*

Following the ILO Convention 138, many countries including Ethiopia, codified a minimum age to determine the cut-off point for young people to be involved in productive activities. The ILO's definition of child labour is based on a modern childhood model in which minimum age is

a generally accepted standard and a structuring factor to determine children's participation in many productive activities (Ruddick 2003: 342). Despite this norm of modern childhood, local practices in the urban Gamo community show that age as such is not a criterion for a child to become involved in weaving activities. Instead, the physical size of the child in terms of height is an important benchmark. Thus, this research considers policies that prohibit children's involvement in productive activities by solely relying on chronological age as reductionist. Because, apart from chronological age, other physical characteristics of the child, such as height, matter to determine children's capability to engage in different types of work.

In the case of weaving, although there are differences between individual cases, children in the 11 to 16 age group have usually reached the appropriate height to operate the weaving loom. This criterion was shared by several child informants. For instance, on a sunny Saturday afternoon, at a locality called *23 kebele*, a group of eight boys (in the ages of seven to nine) who spun for their households pointed out in informal conversation that they had not started weaving. The reason they gave was because they had 'short legs' (direct quote, field notes: Addis Ababa, 27-02-2016). According to these children, as it is necessary to have long legs to operate the treadle (feet pedals), height is an important structuring factor when engaging in weaving practice. Thus younger children who do not meet the height criteria stay away from weaving and engage in other activities such as spinning. As discussed in chapter 4, the main focus of anti-child labour efforts was weaving, overlooking spinning and other activities that children perform in the weaving economy. Importantly, the height requirement by itself ensures that the youngest children do not take up weaving.

Interestingly, a few children associated commencing weaving with a coming of age in their life-phase - transitioning from small children to young adults. For instance, a male weaver (16-years-old) elaborated:

> I used to spin before, but not now. When our father worked on weaving, the older son spun for him; when the older son started weaving, his

> younger brother did the spinning, when the second son started weaving, I spun for him; and when I started weaving, I stopped spinning (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 15-09-2016).

The above quote illustrates that spinning is usually an activity carried out by younger children without weaving skills (see chapter 6 for details). Engagement in weaving, as shown in the quote, changes the position of the child from an everyday spinner into an occasional spinner as the child becomes more involved in more advanced work. This was also illustrated in the semi-structured interviews, as 21 of the 40 child weavers reported that it was always their younger siblings or female members of the family (usually mothers) who spun in the households (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Many of these weavers referred to their younger siblings who spun as '*tinish*' (small) and when asked whether the younger siblings had started weaving would say '*gena new'* (not ready). One specific example that illustrates how involvement in weaving changes Gamo children's life-phase could be the view of Biniam (male weaver, age 15) who said *diwer yehitsanoch sira new* (meaning: spinning is the work of small kids) (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 07-10-2016). Although Biniam occasionally spun, it was his younger sibling (age 10) who usually carried out this task for the household. Likewise, a few of the informants also said that, except for very occasionally, they did not spin as they had already grown up and had a more important activity than spinning to carry out, namely weaving (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

Such changes in the life-phase of Gamo children are also reflected in the weekly financial incentives provided to children. For many boys, their weekly pocket money (*senbeta misa*) increased because of the change in their position from spinners to weaving practitioners (see chapter 6 for details on money). As such, reduced spinning work and involvement in weaving was a subtle sign to young weavers of both genders that they were in a different life-phase vis-à-vis their younger siblings. In relation to gender, as will be discussed in chapter 7, it is worth noting that gender is a key structuring variable in shaping the type of work Gamo people

undertake: it is more common for women to perform spinning – work which is less highly valued than weaving.

Moreover, the period in which young people learn how to weave and practice while producing fabrics is an intermediate period between being a small child and a young adult. In relation to this, when the young informants with the weaving skills were asked whether they could do warping, several of them said it was beyond their capacity and was work carried out by their elders (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). For instance, Elias (male weaver, age 16), said that he could not warp because carrying the roller drum (with a warp thread, approximately 5-10 kilograms) while rolling it for about 2-3 hours was a rather difficult task for a young person like him as the roller is relatively heavy (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 08-03-2016). In addition, Semalign (male weaver, age 14) reported that warping is work for adult males which was done by his father (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 19-09-2016). .

The story of women, as will be discussed in chapter 6, is different insofar as they rarely engage in warping. Participation in particular activities therefore always has meanings related to one's life stage and to gendered cultural practices, (re)shaping the childhood experiences, division of labour, and everyday material and social practices of young people.

Despite the above, the definitions of who is a child, a young adult and an adult based on skills possession are subject to change over time and place. For instance, Abel (male weaver, age 15) explained that while his father was able to warp at the age of 13, this is not common boys of that age of the current generation. The prolongation of schooling in the recent past has delayed the cultivation of key skills such as how to warp. By implication, this delay in skills possession has played a key role in extending childhood and in the way different life-stages are defined (see chapter 7).

## 5.6 Child and adult-initiated engagements in weaving

In Gamo society, engagement in weaving can either be adult-initiated or child-initiated. However, some children also stated that although the request to start weaving might have come from adults, they had already had an interest in taking up weaving that they had not revealed. For instance, a migrant male weaver named Abebe (age 16) who came to Addis from a rural town named *Chencha* to live with his brother at the age of 12, stated that he had wanted to travel to Addis Ababa and become a weaver for some time before his parents asked him to do so (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 07-07-2016). This could be referred to as engagement in weaving based on mutual interests. The other types of engagement are adult-initiated and child-initiated.

The first type of engagement is adult-initiated, and takes place at the request of an adult. In many cases, children are initially asked by adult weavers to perform simple tasks like spinning (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016). This is followed by engagement in basic weaving practices that are discussed below, and helping out adult weavers in making plain fabrics. Furthermore, male weavers across different ages revealed that non-weaving adults living in the countryside also request their sons to travel to urban areas to live with a relative – usually a weaver - who could send them to school. In exchange, the young people develop weaving skills and work for the adult weaver. Derese (male weaver, age 17) disclosed that both his parents requested him to travel to Addis Ababa to live with his older brother (age 27) and develop weaving skills under his brother's guidance, and to support his brother who sent occasional remittences (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 07-07-2016). Derese further noted that his parents (without schooling), who were old, were smallholder farmers living in the countryside, cultivating a small plot of land. For them to send him to a school and cover all his expenses would have been a luxury. Hence, they decided to send him to Addis Ababa where he could get better schooling, working and living with his older brother who needed additional labour, and who carried the burden of supporting the elderly parents in the countryside. Many of the young migrant people

who came to Addis Ababa upon adults' request had similar stories to Derese's, and included elements of social support to families in the countryside.

Moreover, several young migrants pointed out that social reciprocity was a reason for adult-initiated engagement in weaving. In many cases, the migrant's parents in the countryside looked after the city-dwelling weaver's land and other properties, and in return the adult weaver took care of their son in the city. It is usually male Gamo children who travel to the city to become weavers under this arrangement, although a few girls were also found. For instance, Selam (female weaver, age 17) reported that she came from a remote rural Gamo highland village named '*Gema*'. Her parents sent her to Addis to take care of her brother's two children - an adult weaver who also financially supported the family in the countryside (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 04-10-2016). Although Selam initially came for baby-sitting, she later got involved in weaving.

The second type of engagement is child-initiated: several of the Gamo children who participated in this study asked to become weavers themselves. 23 of the 40 semi-structured interview participants requested older generation weavers in their respective households (usually their fathers or older male relatives) to show them how to weave (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 23-10-2016). Many of the adult weavers in the households had, paradoxically, prohibited their children from practicing weaving.

A female weaver named Yemisirach (age 16), for instance, explained that her father forbade her to practice weaving. Instead, he advised her to focus on her schooling (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 04-10-2016). Despite this, she practiced with the shuttle secretly whenever her father left the home. Similarly, Teklu (male weaver, age 15) said:

> I asked my father to show me how to weave. However, he kept telling me that I would not improve my life if I got into weaving. He rather pushed me towards my school work. As I realized that he would not allow me to touch the loom, I intentionally used to break a warp thread and practice *mequater* (denting) whenever he left home (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 07-10-2016).

The above interview extract shows that despite some adult weavers' refusal, young people have used their own strategies to learn some of the important weaving skills. Girls in particular are discouraged from becoming weavers due to the sociocultural attitudes towards female bodies (see chapter 6). However, Yemisirach and other girls in the villages resisted the sociocultural attitudes that constrained Gamo women's agency to become weavers. This should be understood as a form of agency in which children make their own decision, despite adult disapproval, to develop weaving skills. Whereas some children and young people, as disclosed above, would wait until their fathers left the home and practice by themselves in his absence (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016), others would go to their neighbours' home or bring their friends to their home and learn weaving skills under the guidance of more advanced peers. For instance, Asaye (male weaver, age 15) elaborated:

> My father said that weaving did not change his life that much. For this reason he never wanted me to learn the skills. As he forbade me to learn from him, I had to learn it myself, hiding from him and sometimes calling a friend to show me, usually when my father left the house to sell fabrics (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 06-09-2016).

Likewise, Meron (female weaver, age 17) learned the basic skills (throwing the shuttle and making plain fabric) from her older brother (age 26 who lived in the same household) when her father travelled to the countryside in the summer (interview note: Addis Ababa, 04-10-2016). She developed some of the basic skills little by little. Meron's younger brother (age 12) also wanted to develop weaving skills. She revealed:

> My younger brother is interested in learning how to weave. As my father did not want to teach him, he learned from my brother. He started learning *likim* (making patterns) when my father left for the countryside this summer (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 04-10-2016).

Such forms of self-initiated engagement in weaving are not a specific phenomenon of a particular generation of weavers. Rather, as part of the learning-by-doing system that was elaborated above, several older

generation Gamo weavers also travelled at a young age from the countryside (rural Gamo highlands) to Addis Ababa by themselves to become weavers.

The above details show that the process of becoming a weaver could be either child-initiated or adult-initiated. The process could also be joint, if both adults and children are interested in a child learning weaving skills. However, whoever takes the initiative, several months and even years of practice, under the guidance of a *tibebegna* weaver, is required for a child to become a well-established weaver. The new weaver (*lemaj*) needs to pass through a few basic processes that I will explain in the next section.

## 5.7 Processes of becoming a weaver

The table below demonstrates how a male child becomes a weaver in urban Gamo society, passing through different processes and life trajectories.

*Table 5.4: A Gamo boy's story of becoming a weaver*

**Elias**

Elias (male weaver, age 17), is the only son of a divorced mother named Zenebu (age 40). He was born and grew up in Meketeya sefer. As a child, Elias grew up observing his father weaving in the home on a daily basis. Just like several of his village friends, he started helping his father spinning at the age of eight. By the age of 12, he was already sitting at his father's side and closely observing how the vertical and horizontal threads are interlaced on a weaving loom. He continued to practice with the shuttle, mimicking his fathers' movements. Little by little, he developed the basic skills of weaving. He kept practicing whenever his father left the home. In particular, after cutting the fabric that was produced, his father usually let Elias practice weaving independently with the leftover thread. However, before Elias had become a well-established weaver, his father and mother got divorced, and subsequently his father left the home. Elias was aged 14 at that time – one year after he had started actual weaving. Elias's mother (Zenebu) was a daily labourer, washing clothes in households when asked to do so. Her income was irregular and barely sufficient for subsistence. Hence Elias continued weaving in order for the family to be able to fulfil its basic needs. He had, however, skill gaps, making him slower in producing fabric, and he did not know how to make designs. As a result, much of the yarn that Zenebu bought for Elias to weave was wasted, and the fabric he made had a lower market value. The family had to find a way to improve Elias's weaving skills in order to raise its income. To this end, Zenebu sub-rented her one room house to a *tibebegna* male weaver so that her son could cultivate his skills under the guidance of the *tibebegna* weaver. Zenebu gave a 50 birr discount to the *tibebegna* as the agreement was for the *tibebegna* weaver to guide Elias to become more skilled. Elias explained that if he made a mistake or wanted to learn more skills such as denting, he usually talked to the *tibebegna* weaver who would explain how to improve the quality of the fabric (*cherk*), or demonstrate how to link detached threads. Elias in turn practiced mimicking the movements. In many cases, Elias used a thick thread in order to avoid frequently breaking it – a common problem novice weavers have. As he became more involved in weaving, Elias became more attached to it and reduced his social contacts with friends thus giving more time to practice. It became a habit to disengage from his peer groups in order to engage in weaving. On one occasion, he explained that whenever he finished school work, the only thing that he really wanted to do was weaving, and rushed home to practice. Sometimes, he did not even want to wait for his friends to walk home with him to the village as he thought they wasted time wandering the streets. This has led him to lead a more solitary life compared to many non-weaving students in the school who have stronger social interactions. Nonetheless, he sometimes gets bored with weaving and then spends time with two of his male friends (Gamo weavers) watching movies, playing soccer and chatting. No one dictates to him how he should spend his time though. After one and a half years practicing with the *tibebegna* weaver, Elias had developed fairly good weaving skills (at the age of 16) that included quickly and consistently throwing the shuttle and how to make simple patterns such as *zenbaba* and *kesha*. In 2016, the family earned a weekly net income of 500 birr (approximately 22.70 Euros) from Elias's weaving. However, Elias thinks that he still lacks some important skills. For instance, he has not learnt how to warp. Two male adult weavers in the village do the warping for him. For this service, his mother pays them 70 birr a month (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

The above table shows how a typical urban male Gamo child passes through different processes such as everyday observation, throwing a shuttle, practicing weaving and making a design (*tibeb*) in order to develop weaving skills. This process is irrespective of the family situation and socioeconomic status. The learning-by-doing process, as demonstrated in the table above, involves observation, mimicking, dialogue and continued practice for several months. There are, nonetheless, individual differences in developing the skills. An important element to developing weaving skills, as shown in the table, is to work under the guidance of a more advanced weaver or *tibebegna,* in line with Vygotsky's idea of MKOs discussed in chapter 2. From such learning-by-doing practices (careful observation, mimicking and dialogue), the child cultivates skills to transform physical input into a product with value. This is quite different from the usual curriculum-based learning encounters in school settings that are mainly command-based instructions meant to equip students with a theoretical knowledge based on internalizing facts - rather than cultivating practical skills and competencies - that have little relevance to their everyday material life.

Thus, based on interviews, participant observations and my own experience in starting to learn how to weave from five male child weavers (see chapter 3), I identified the following four learning-by-doing processes to becoming an independent weaver. However, these processes are not sequential (linear) and the development of additional skills such as warping requires more trainings.

*Table 5.5: Key learning processes of weaving and the traits cultivated*

| ***Basic processes of developing weaving*** | ***Key traits cultivated*** |
|---|---|
| Step 1: Everyday observation | Developing attachment, patience |
| Step 2: Practice making designs (l*ikim*) | Focus, care, numerical skills |
| Step 3: Practice with the shuttle (m*ewerwer*) | Accuracy, harmony |
| Step 4: Plain weaving (*shiw shiw*) | Speed (agility), consistency |

*Source:* participant observations in households, Addis Ababa, 2016

In the section below, I explain each of the learning processes described in the table above.

### 5.7.1 Everyday observation

Everyday observation is one of the most important and fundamental processes to becoming a weaver. This is because observing experienced weavers greatly helps learning weavers imitate the movements and pick up how to harmoniously use hands and feet in the weaving process. In the learning-by-doing system, everyday observation usually takes place in a workplace where the child is available. Importantly, homes have served as more conducive places for children to experience everyday observation of weaving. In factories, however, children's opportunities for everyday observation are no longer possible due to the introduction of the politics of age that was highlighted in chapter 4. As such, young people are constrained from observing and engaging in weaving activities within the factories. Everyday observation, as shown in table 5.6 above, creates a sense of attachment with weaving and an opportunity to internalize the movements of more advanced weavers. A key informant named Dawit (male, age approximately 47 who worked in Gulele sub-city MSSEA) explained that, contrary to many of his peers, he had no chance in his childhood to observe weaving in the home as his father, a weaver and a member of a weaving cooperative in the 1980s, was among the weavers who worked in a factory during the Socialist Derg regime. In his view, although he is a son of Gamo weaver, he could not become a weaver as he missed the opportunity to observe weaving practices on a daily basis (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016).

Other informants also reported that children in households which practice weaving develop some important weaving traits based on their everyday observation. For instance, Demissie, a key informant (male ex-weaver, approximately age 46), said that watching the work of experienced weavers from an early age will eventually inspire the child to develop weaving skills (KII note: Addis Ababa, date 11-12-2015). Moreover, Sileshi (male weaver, age 17) noted that whenever he saw the fabric his father made with beautiful intricate designs, he wished to make the same type of fabrics (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 12-10-2016). In addition, Zenebe (a highly skilled male weaver, age approximately 45)

explained that an emergent weaver becomes attached to the occupation and internalizes patience from observing an advanced weaver sitting for several hours working on a single piece of fabric (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 23-09-2016). Therefore, everyday observation is instrumental to developing patience, a fundamental trait that a well-established weaver needs to possess to continue weaving.

### 5.7.2 Practice to make patterns (*likim*)

The making of designs is usually performed using a bamboo stick (locally called *Melkemia* in Amharic and *Matso mitsa* in Gamogna). In this process, the child sits to the left of the weaver for at least 1-2 hours whenever the *tibebegna* weaver makes designs on the fabric. Initially, the child observes how the *tibebegna* lays the designs (*tibeb melkem*) on the fabric (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Careful observation is necessary to learn about the structure of a pattern and to count the threads, as a single mistake could ruin the whole process. The advanced weaver then demonstrates how to make a particular pattern, knitting the warp thread[4] with a bamboo stick. The child mimics the moves with a small bamboo stick. The core traits a child develops in this way are focus, care, and numerical skills. A lack of focus is the main reason for errors in the production of designs and if the emergent weaver (*lemaj*) makes a mistake, the advanced weaver has to explain and demonstrate how to sort it out. Hence, apart from careful observation of the work of an advanced weaver, a dialogue between the emergent weaver and advanced weaver is important during this practice. The pictures below illustrate how children learn to make designs. The bottom picture (fig. 5.2) shows a 16-year-old male weaver guiding his cousin (14-year-old male weaver), the picture (fig.5.1) on top shows a father showing his 13-year-old son how to make a design.

*Figure 5.1: A father guiding his 12- year-old boy on how to make patterns*

.

*Source; image taken during a household visit, 2015.*

*Figure 5.2: A 16-year-old boy guiding his cousin in making patterns*

Souce: image taken by trial auto-photography exercises of children, 2016

According to an informant named Zenebe, (age approximately 45, highly skilled weaver), depending on the intensity of practice, it usually takes up to one year to learn to make simple patterns, including copying patterns (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 23-09-2016). In many cases the child needs to practice many types of designs, starting from the simple ones then progressing to the more complex ones, and specializing in different designs. It is, however, important to note that one can become a weaver without knowing how to work on designs. Several adult weavers in the villages did not know how to make designs themselves and could only produce plain fabric. This is because they never practiced making designs during their childhood (see chapter 6 on skill differentiation).

### 5.7.3 Throwing a shuttle (*mewerwer*)

During this process, the advanced weaver throws the shuttle (*mewerweria* in Amharic and *moqe* in Gamogna) from the right and the trainee weaver receives it on the other side and throws it back from the left, imitating the weavers' action. In order to practice with the shuttle, a child needs to reach the appropriate height so that his/her hands and legs can operate the loom. According to three adult male informants in households in Shamma Sefer, children usually reach the appropriate height at around the age of 13 or 14, although individual differences are quite common (field notes: Addis Ababa, 11-12-2015). The primary reason children start with *likim* (learning to make patterns, see above) and then proceed to throwing the shuttle is because, in many cases, the legs and arms of those below the age of 13 are too short to use the loom.

However, a few boys and adults reported that they witnessed younger children below the age of 12 doing weaving in their village. For instance, Seyoum (male weaver, age 17) explained that although he had not seen it himself, he had heard of a few cases of boys as young as 10 weaving in his village at Chefe sefer, tying ropes to their feet instead of using a treadle (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 12-10-2016). This could be taken

as an anomalous practice as it is an outlier of the widespread practice of Gamo children of this age in Addis Ababa.

In practice, it is quite common to break the warp threads when throwing the shuttle (field notes: Addis Ababa, 02-03-2016). The emergent weaver thus needs to know how to fix them (denting) - a skill one can pick up in this phase. In this context, the type of warp used matters. For instance, using a thick warp thread or a Chinese pollster thread (to make a scarf)[5] makes weaving easier for the emergent weaver as these types of threads are stronger and are less easily broken (field notes, Addis Ababa, 2016).

The core traits that an emergent weaver develops during this process are harmony and accuracy (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). With regards to harmony, an emergent weaver develops how to use both hands (throwing shuttle) and feet (on the treadle) at the same time, without thinking about the moves. In relation to accuracy, the emergent weaver becomes an expert in throwing the shuttle from the right position (close to the heddle) to reduce the number of warp breakings and frequent dropping[6] of the shuttle.

### 5.7.4 Plain weaving (*shiw shiw*)

After practicing the skills described above, the emergent weaver starts actual weaving by making a plain fabric (*limut*) that can be sold in the market. During this process, the emergent weaver develops two core traits: speed and consistency. Speed (agility) in throwing a shuttle is at the heart of weaving which ensures productivity, while consistency is necessary in using the reed to interweave the warp thread and weft yarn. Again, a practitioner needs to perform these activities without having to think about them. Without these skills, a weaver will produce low quality fabric with an inconsistent thickness, thus reducing its market value. Demissie, a key informant (male ex-weaver, approximately age 46) explained that this type of fabric is considered '*Karda*' (low quality or rotten cloth) (field notes: Addis Ababa 11-12-2015).

Thus, to produce a relatively high-quality plain fabric (*tiru cherk*), the emergent weaver needs to keep practicing and develop consistency. In particular, the weaver needs to be consistent in using the reed while filling the warp (the vertical thread) with the weft yarn (the horizontal thread in the shuttle); if not the fabric will not have a uniform texture (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). If a weaver beats the warps hard with the heddle, the fabric will become more dense (compact) (locally known as *Chifik*), and if he beats it with less power, the fabric will become less dense (less compact) (locally called *Zirzir*). In order to produce a fine fabric with a uniform texture, the weaver has to be consistent in exerting power when using the heddle and beating the warp. The more the weaver practices, the better the quality of the fabric and the higher its market value.

In sum, one needs to pass through the above important processes to cultivate weaving skills. Passing through each of these processes is believed to be easier during childhood than in adulthood, with the learning-by-doing system serving as a key way for Gamo children to become weavers.

However, in urban Ethiopia, there is also another system of learning how to weave. This is mostly delivered through the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) system in formal school settings. TVET, which has been delivered a few times as part of the government's enterprise development programme is, however, a short-term training that is given highly irregularly. As highlighted below, the weaving training provided under the TVET system is largely characterized by its failure to produce competent weavers.

## 5.8 The TVET system

This study found that the TVET weaving programme was not well developed and characterized by a failure to achieve its learning objectives. The irregularity of trainings, the lack of standardization of the programme, and the incompatibility of the training with the sociocultural context all contributed to the lack of vocational competency of TVET

trainees' vis-à-vis other Gamo weavers who passed through the informal learning-by-doing trajectory in home-based workplaces.

In the post-1991 period, following the construction of factories and the formation of cooperatives as discussed in chapter 4, weaving became incorporated in the training programmes of few TVET colleges in Addis Ababa. The trainings were, however, provided on an irregular basis, when the local government's Micro and Small Scale Enterprises (MSSEs) office sent trainees who were supposedly organized in cooperative associations and had secured workplaces. A formal training in weaving was given in Addis Ababa in three selected TVET colleges in Gulele sub-city where weaving clusters are concentrated (key informant: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016). More specifically, weaving training as part of the TVET programme was started after 2009 – a period during which new workplace clusters were organized and after the establishment of weavers' cooperatives. The training was part of a local government initiative to equip cooperative members of MSSEs with necessary skills and to create more employment opportunities for them.

Ethiopia has had vocational skills training programmes under different political regimes since the 1940s. However, it was only after 2008 that the cooperative-based TVET[7] programme was introduced with the new TVET strategy (Solomon 2016: 38). The TVET strategy aimed at supplying skilled labour based on the country's labour market needs. In this vein, a lot of effort and resources were spent on increasing the number of TVET colleges and graduates. For example, the number of TVET schools increased from 199 in 2005 to 505 in 2008; while the number of trainees increased from 106,336 to 320,255 in 2012 (MoE: 2012: 55). However, this seemingly impressive quantitative expansion to meet the competency needs of the country's economy has been questioned and contested as the majority of TVET graduates could not pass competency exams in subsequent years. For instance, 82% of the TVET graduates failed vocational competency-based assessments in 2012 (Krishnan & Shorshadze 2013: 19).

Various factors have been attributed as causing the competency problems in the Ethiopian TVET programme. A recent study found that incompatibility between the actual TVET programmes and the needs of the labour market, a lack of psychological and skills preparedness by TVET teachers, and limited school-industry linkages were among the reasons for the graduates' limited competency (Solomon 2016: 25). Moreover, TVET colleges were over-stretched due to an additional responsibility: apart from providing training to regular students, they were expected to fill the skills gap of various groups of people sent by the local government Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises Agency (MSSEA). These additional trainings, which were cooperative based, were irregular and short-term, and aimed at providing skills trainings to members of cooperatives. Importantly, TVET colleges were supposed to deliver these trainings free of charge. However, delivering TVET is very expensive as it requires using various costly inputs which are sometimes hard to find. This has contributed to the provision of low quality training to various members of cooperatives.

With regards to the weaving skills training, according to government data, less than 200 adults (of both sexes) have received training since 2012 (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 11-09-2016). Trainees who were organized in weaving cooperatives received short courses in the factories. During my field visits, no training was given to individuals due to the irregularity of the programme and perhaps because no unskilled individuals were organized in cooperatives in 2016. However, a key informant disclosed that only three TVET colleges provided the necessary skills training.

In one of the TVET colleges, Entoto Polytechnic, a training programme on weaving and knitting was available in the textile and garment department. A female informant (age, approximately 45), who was a faculty member in the department, explained that a training in weaving was offered a few times as a result of a request by the Addis Ababa MSSEA (interview notes, Addis Ababa, 16-09-2016). This training was held irregularly and was demand-driven by the government.

It was given for three to four months depending on the agreement between local government officials and the TVET college. Compared to the learning-by-doing system discussed above, the TVET training period was too short to enable the cultivation of basic weaving skills, let alone to produce competent weavers. The training was not standardized as it had no registered level[8] nor curriculum.

The story given by local government representatives was rather different. A local government official (male, age 42) from Gulele sub-city MSSEA stated that TVET colleges did not have the capacity to deliver training on how to weave (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016). In particular, he said that they did not have the right inputs or technology needed to deliver the training. Moreover, the trainers in the TVET college were less committed to providing training to students sent by MSSEA as they received no financial incentive. Drawing from his past experience, the key informant shared the following story of failure.

> In 2012/13, we sent 15 adult female trainees (adults above the age of 30) to a college called Entoto Polytechnic. We had at that time a plan to form cooperative weavers' association. However, the women did not become competent weavers as a result of the training[9]. Since I was in charge of organizing the weavers' cooperatives, I received a bad evaluation (*tegemegemku*). My bosses even demoted me to a lower position (KII notes, Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016)

In July 2016, at the Gundish Meda factory, I met some of the women (approximately between the ages of 30-60) who took the TVET training. According to these women, in 2012/13 they received seven months of training in two phases. Despite this, the women explained that they could not compete with the skilful weavers who had learned and developed their weaving skills during their childhood. One of the women (age 52) clarified that when they initially started, the number of women cooperative members was 41 (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 12-10-2016). However, the majority of the women (26) left the cooperative as they found the training time-consuming and difficult. Another woman (age 58) further elaborated:

> …First, we had three months training in scarf making[10]. As we were not skilled enough after this short course, we added another four months of training. Then we began working and selling some fabric. We tried to make shawls (*netela*). The problem is that we are old and weak. Our eyes are getting weak. Those who learned how to weave at an early age can quickly fix the warp when it breaks (denting). Moreover, in this work (she was working on a plain fabric) each warp (the vertical thread) should be intertwined into the heald frame (*Meen*) and passed through the reed (*Gefeta*) (attaching the warp onto the loom). We did not learn how to attach the warp onto the loom. We also do not know how to warp. In my case, it is always my husband and my son (weavers who learned in the home during their childhood) who come here and attach the warps onto the loom. If we had started young, we would have been more skilled… (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 14-10-2016).

In this excerpt, the female weaver compares the skills of her group with others who developed their weaving skills at an early age. She also clarified the various skills gaps, such as warping and attaching the warp onto the loom that the members of her cooperative association had.

In fact, after repeated field visits and observations in the factory where these women worked, I found that only two of the 16 cooperative members weave regularly (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). The remaining 14 members were seen in the factory twisting *netela* (shawl) thread - a job factory-based weavers, tailors and local traditional cloth shops outsourced to them. Interestingly, many of these women sub-rented their looms to skilled male weavers whom they called *Kotari* (literally: someone who pays rent). From this rental arrangement, the women earned money - an amount of 40 to 50 birr per fabric (1.75-2.10 Euros).

Weavers who worked as trainers have their own views and stories in relation to the TVET training. For instance, a key informant (male, ex-weaver, age approximately 45) who provided training on a TVET programme in 2013, shared how a three month weaving skills training programme organized by the local government (Addis Ababa Social and Civil Affairs Bureau) with the aim of developing the skills of 17 young

people (two female and 15 male, age above 18) living on the streets so that they could become 'self-sufficient', was not successful. This trainer said that he initially complained to the authorities that three months was too short a period in which to acquire weaving skills. No one listened to him. Later on, all but two of the trainees dropped out, resulting in the failure of the training objectives and a waste of resources. The main reason for the failure, according to this informant, was the time constraint: he rushed to provide the trainees with skills needed more time and repetition to master. In contrast to these trainees, other young people in the same government programme who were trained in cobblestone production (for streets) were relatively successful, accumulating hundreds of thousands birr as capital from their work after the training. It is thus clear that an irregular TVET training without a deeper understanding of the sector and the nature of the occupation leads to failure. The TVET training failed to achieve its' learning objectives and to produce competent weavers.

## 5.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided a localized analysis of childhoods focusing on the learning-by-doing practices of Gamo children in the weaving economy. In so doing, it demonstrated the interactions of the local (the learning-by-doing system) and the global processes (i.e., the TVET system and global discourses on children's bodies) in changing Gamo childhoods, altering the processes of becoming a weaver. The chapter illustrated the contradictory nature of the global and local childhood discourses. The localized discourses assert that being at the appropriate childhood life-phase (age 11 to 16), and attaining the right physical size (height) matter in order to easily internalize the key traits of a weaver, and to develop greater skills. In contrast, the global childhood discourse presents the bodies of children as vulnerable, prioritizing the importance of chronological age in determining young peoples' involvement in weaving. Yet, as demonstrated in this chapter, weaving is not a simple straightforward form of exploitation. Instead, it is a time-consuming

vocational and productive venture in which children spend several months and even years to become skillful in. Cultivating weaving skills is a relational process that involves negotiations and interdependence. This relational process is also a component of the generational fabric based on (fictive) kin relations, showing that working children's experiences are situated in sets of sociocultural relations in their everyday places and beyond (in the case of child migrants). Based on this, the chapter challenged anti-child labour campaigns that follow normative singular age-based criteria for participation in productive activities that many countries, including Ethiopia, codified following the ILO's Minimum Age Convention. The chapter also showed that against the ideals of work-free childhoods, many children continued working in the weaving economy. This is understood a form of agency. Children's agency, in this regard, is conceptualized in relation to their actions in mobilizing networks of relatedness to cultivate weaving skills, in light of their purposeful engagement in the co-production of value with adults, and in connection to their own (child-initiated) engagements in the weaving economy.

This chapter also demonstrated that the recently introduced formal but irregular training through the TVET system is at odds with the workings of traditional weaving skills cultivation, and is characterized by failure. Consequently, the chapter argued that in its current form, the TVET system cannot reproduce the labour force needed in the weaving economy, making it difficult to replace the traditional learning-by-doing system that has long been in place contributing to social reproduction. By mapping out different core activities and skills in the urban weaving economy, the next chapter provides an analysis of how the learning-by-doing system has greatly contributed to the processes of social reproduction.

## Notes

[1] In line with the young people's reference of their local places as *Sefer* and, sometimes, *Mender*- Amharic terms which could be equated to the term village - the local places where this research was conducted are referred as villages because these are sub-urban peripheral neighbourhoods with particular local names.

[2] This youngster was involved in soccer training with a local football club.

[3] Several of the adult informants did not know their exact dates of birth but they did know their year of birth.

[4] The vertical thread.

[5] Fabric made from thick warp thread or a Chinese pollster thread that has a relatively lower market value than those made from thin thread, called *Menen*.

[6] Frequent dropping of the shuttle greatly reduces the productivity of a weaver's work making him/her slower.

[7] This is a form of workplace training giving practical work experience to trainees. It is different from theoretical, classroom based teaching. In Ethiopia, it was introduced in 2008 with various stakeholders from the private and public sectors participating in the training programme, each with different responsibilities (MoE, 2008: 7). In relation to MSEs, for instance, the local government MSSEA and Cooperative Agency, the Workplace Administration Agency, and training colleges were involved to scale up the skills of trainees in various occupational categories.

[8] In the Ethiopian TVET programme, there are four different levels (1-4). The 1st and 2nd levels provide basic operational knowledge and the 3rd and 4th levels provide advanced skills (MoE 2008). However, weaving had no level as a particular handicrafts profession.

[9] Although this has been one of the problems in the weaving sector so far, a recent joint report by the Bureau of Micro and Small Scale Enterprises, the Ministry of Industry, and the Ethiopia Textile Institute did not consider it to be a shortcoming. In the assessment, three main problems were identified in relation to the traditional weaving economy. These were, in order, input problems, market problems, and technology problems. I was informed that the government's top priority for the next couple of years is in solving input problems. No plan was set for the immediate future to look at the problems of labour (re)production.

[10] Compared to making shawls, scarf making is easier because the input used (China thread) is stronger and does not break as easily during weaving. I discovered this for myself when trying out weaving with young people.

# 6 Examining social reproduction in the urban weaving economy

## 6.1 Introduction

In urban Ethiopia, young peoples' struggles for hope and success develop from occupational and status hierarchies and class relations (Mains 2012: 25). This chapter explains the nature of weaving and illustrates the complexities associated with being a weaver. It thereby unpacks the gendered and intergenerational power relations in the urban weaving economy. Specifically, the chapter provides a response to the third research question: how, and to what effect, do relations of gender and generation shape the acquisition of weaving skills in young people's lives and what is the role of place in this? The chapter demonstrates that the weaving economy is not only about weaving but also about various activities and life-phase transitions in different skill strata. Based on this, it challenges the anti-child labour and trafficking programmes that do not consider life-phase transitions nor the gendered and generational characteristics of the different skills groups of workers. The chapter, therefore, argues that by overlooking the life-phase transitions of workers across the different skill strata in the weaving economy, work-free childhoods will adversely affect labour reproduction processes.

The chapter takes skills as a mode of stratification among those Gamo people who work in the urban weaving economy in both the home and the factories. Both workplaces are important sites in which to understand and analyse the composition of the labour force, explain the gendered and intergenerational characteristics of workers, and to demonstrate the relations of production as shaped by increased sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements that lead to the deepening of informality. As explained in the chapter, the skills levels of those Gamo people who work in home and factory settings greatly vary and are valued differently. However, regardless of the place of work, progression

in skills is realized through transition from one skill group to the other. Age, gender and generation intersect in stratifying the different skill groups. Yet by emphasizing the dangers of work, international anti-child labour discourses overlook the importance of possessing greater skills to free oneself from exploitation and to facilitate life-phase transitions, and thereby enable working children to become independent weavers, working for themselves rather than under the control of more advanced adult weavers.

Informed by feminist political economy (see chapter 2), the chapter emphasizes gender to explain the underlying reasons that legitimize the division of labour and thereby the unequal gendered power relations in the weaving economy. As shown in the chapter, girls are believed locally to be physically vulnerable and unsuitable for weaving. This is mainly due to problematic gendered essentialisms that discourage girls from becoming weavers. Such sociocultural practices and attitudes have constrained the agency of Gamo girls to cultivate important weaving skills. Whilst boys progress in their skills development across life-phases, in most cases, girls remain in the same skill group, occupying the lowest level in the workforce hierarchy. This culturally influenced practice is, very different from the practices in many societies elsewhere in which weaving is mainly a female occupation. The implication of females' relatively low involvement in weaving is that they benefit the least, both in terms of income and status. Consequently, the chapter underpins the position that, in order to develop an informed intervention program, work-free childhoods proponents need to take into account the gendered power relations and division of labour in the weaving economy.

As demonstrated below, the concept of social reproduction is used as an analytical tool of this chapter (see chapter 2). This helps to capture how childhood learning-by-doing practices, along with the gendered division of labour, have profoundly contributed to the reproduction the labour force along with the gendered and generational divisions of

labour that shape the social relations of production in the weaving economy.

## 6.2 Social reproduction and differentiation

A range of cultural attitudes and practices, which are subjective in time and place, shape children's and young peoples' involvement in productive and reproductive activities (Katz 2001: 711). The sociocultural practices and norms of a particular place contribute to the formation of individual as well as collective identities. In many instances, identity formation begins in childhood within family life, shaped by language and sociocultural practices in which individuals internalize gender differences (Petrson 2005: 511). This leads to the (re)production of masculine and feminine identities and the creation and consolidation of a gendered division of labour. Thus, a critical analysis of the political economy of weaving in urban Ethiopia that employs social reproduction as an analytical tool with intersecting variables such as, age, generation, gender and division of labour, is of paramount relevance in explaining children's work and in situating childhood in the analysis of the changes and continuities in the social structure. This chapter aims to accomplish just that.

In order to do so, this chapter utilizes social reproduction, as explained in chapter 2, as part of the feminist political economy framework, to provide an analysis from the vantage point of labour reproduction, and to highlight the politico-economic and cultural aspects of how weaving skills are reproduced. These aspects include the gendered and generational practices that maintain and reinforce relations of production and the long-term reproduction of labour-power (Katz 2001: 711). Furthermore, as part of explaining the social reproduction process, this chapter emphasizes the intergenerational transmission of cultural practices, and the parental competencies and values from which children appropriate weaving skills and knowledge through some form of learning (Tznakis 2011: 79). Such an analysis of social reproductive patterns is interdependent with the discussion in chapter 5 on the

concept of interpretive reproduction to illustrate how young peoples' learning is both an individualized and collective development process. Nonetheless, despite the interdependence of social reproduction and interpretive reproduction as part of explaining reproductive development (Corsaro 2012: 709), the former emphasizes structure and the latter gives space to agency. Chapter 2 elaborated how this research bridges the divide between agency-based and structure-based analysis through the use of the concept of place.

Importantly, insofar as the weaving economy primarily operates through skilled weavers, a key variable in this research, which was found useful in explaining the movement from one status location to another, is skill. It is fundamentally through the constant reproduction of weavers' labour-power that the weaving economy exists. In this respect, skill-based analysis provides a better understanding of how social differentiation is enacted among various working populations in the weaving economy. As will be explained hereafter, the weaving economy is constituted of workers in different skill categories, among whom working children are important actors. Based on some key defining features such as skill levels (competencies) that certain types of workers demonstrate based on their age, gender and generation (as a life-phase), I have thus stratified the different skill groups of workers who work in the homes and factories.

## 6.3 Social differentiation and skills categories in the urban weaving economy

Karsten (1972: 120) already indicated the presence of different specialist groups within the weaving occupation in rural southern Ethiopia although he did not give a detailed analysis of skill categories. Likewise, the weaving economy in urban Ethiopia is not homogenous, as the workforce constitutes Gamo people of different skill levels, generations, age and gender. Girma (male weaver, age 16) explained:

> … It is difficult to determine my skill level as weavers can be classified in several skill categories. Some are excellent (*tibebegna*). When I see their

> work, I feel like I do not have the skills, but, in contrast, some others produce low-quality fabrics compared to me (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 05-10-2016).

The above quote demonstrates the presence of different skill groups within workers in the weaving economy; these skill groups require stratification for a better understanding of young peoples' position, the value of their work, and the generational and gendered dimensions of the division of labour. Hence, based on child and adult weavers' own skill ratings, and an assessment of the market value of the fabrics different weavers produce, this chapter categorizes the various people working in the weaving economy into four workforce strata. These are supportive/first workforce strata, practicing weavers (*lemaj*)/second workforce strata, the weavers' workforce strata (*shemane*), and the highly skilled weavers/*tibebegna shemane*/. The table below shows the different strata in line with several core activities (skills) that serve as discernible sets of standards for stratification purposes.

*Table 6.1: Types of skills/activities of workforce groups*

| *No* | *List of activities/skills* | *Skill strata* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th |
| | Elementary skills/ processes | | | | |
| 1. | Spinning | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2. | Twisting Shawl[1]/*Netela* | ✓ | | | |
| 3. | Sewing[2] Shawl/*Netela* | ✓ | | | |
| 4. | Embroidery | ✓ | | | |
| | Intermediate skills | | | | |
| 5. | Throwing shuttle | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6. | Making plain fabric | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7. | Denting | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8. | Making simple patterns | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 9. | Specializing in particular fabrics[3] | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Advanced skills | | | | |
| 10. | Attaching the warp onto the loom | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 11. | Wrapping | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 12. | Working on any type of fabric | | | | ✓ |
| 13. | Making complex patterns | | | | ✓ |
| 14. | Copying patterns | | | | ✓ |
| 15. | (Re)creating and modifying | | | | ✓ |

*Source:* author's finding from interviews and observations, Addis Ababa, 2015/16.

The above heterogeneous skills are referred to as 'concrete labour', and they shape the division of labour in the weaving economy. Concrete labour refers to useful activities for the materialization of human labour: it is only through concrete labour that the production of value can be realized (Marx 1976 [1867]: 39). However, Weber (1968: 305) critiqued the Marxist analysis of class, stating that it fails to show the skill differentials of workers, and usually only gives a monopolistic qualification that overlooks semi-skilled workers, apprentices, or other groups of workers based on age, gender and generation. Citing weavers as an example, Weber highlighted that although Marxian analysis viewed them in their totality, weaving in reality might require up to five years of uninterrupted work to achieve the best level of efficiency (ibid: 305). Max Weber's critique fits in very well with the findings of this study in which weavers in urban Ethiopia have diverse skill levels or competencies that are clearly demonstrated in the above table. Apart from competencies, however, there are other classifying features of the four different strata that I show in the table below.

*Table 6.2: Classifications of skill-strata in the weaving economy*

| *No.* | *Workers' skill stratum in the weaving economy* | *Types of people involved* | *Some examples of fabric types* | *Value of work (price) April 2016 (Shiro Meda market)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 1st work force group (supportive strata) | Mostly adult women and girls and boys (age below 11) | No weaving skills but do supportive works like spinning and twisting shawl thread | 4 birr-25 birr/ piece |
| **2.** | 2nd workforce group (practicing weavers (*lemaj*) strata | Mostly boys (age 11-14) | Plain fabric *(Llimut)* e.g. *shimshim (plain challis shawl), kesha, riga zenbaba, ayine Bego, cherchere, mekes Mit,* | 25 birr-30birr/ meter & 100 birr-250 birr/ piece |
| **3.** | 3rd workforce group Weavers (*shemane*) strata | Mostly boys and adults (age above 14) | Simple patterns *(kelal tibeb) e.g. Fert, diamond, keremela.* | 200 birr- 500 birr/ piece |
| **4.** | 4th workforce group Highly skilled weavers (*tibebegna shemane*) strata | Predominantly boys and adults (age above 16) | Complicated patterns (*kebad tibeb)* eg. *katena, zinar, sharko, zendo, jano* | 500 birr-3500 birr/ piece |

*Source:* author's field observations and interviews with weavers and shop owners in 2015/16 in Addis Ababa (taken from field notes and interview transcripts).

The above table illustrates how the four workforce strata are structured by gender, age and generation. In many cases, girls and women remain in the lower workforce stratum for specific reasons that legitimize the gendered division of labour (explained below). As weaving involves knowing how to perform various types of activities, one starts with supportive tasks and becomes a skilled weaver with practice and an upgrading of skills. The skill levels of the four strata are valued[4] differentially (both socially and financially), affecting earnings and an individual's position in the weaving economy. Due to this, the skill strata are hierarchal and are characterized by inequality between the skill

groups. These inequalities are reproduced in the process of becoming a weaver across generations and genders. It is through the progression of skills and upward transition from one workforce group to the other that the labour force in the weaving economy reproduces itself. In this light, as discussed in chapter 5, hands-on experience is of paramount importance to proceed to the next skill level. It is thus rare for one to bypass a particular skill group and attain a higher skill level as the cultivation of skills is an incremental process. In the sections below, I explain each skill group of Gamo working in the weaving economy and how mobility from one stratum to the other occurs with increased skill.

### 6.3.1 The supplementary stratum

Members of this workforce stratum share two common characteristics. Firstly, as the name indicates, they possess supportive skills - rather than direct weaving skills - that are relatively simple: skills such as spinning, twisting shawl, and sewing. While twisting shawl thread and sewing are usually left to females, embroidery[5] is done by both genders (see table 6.4. below), with spinning being more common among younger siblings and females. The preliminary engagement to weaving starts with spinning (explained in chapter 5). Gamo girls as young as nine and women engage in spinning and twisting shawls in the villages (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). For instance, in a household I visited at Shamma Sefer, an elderly widowed Gamo woman (approximately 65) spun up to six weft-yarns per day and earned 30 birr (1.40 Euros) to supplement her household income (field notes: Addis Ababa, 12-11-2015). The male weavers in the village, including her two sons (middle aged), outsourced the spinning work to her.

Secondly, the workforce in this stratum is dominated by females. As shown in table 6.2 above, the different activities in each stratum are valued differently, both socially and financially, and females mostly take part in work in the 1st stratum. Based on this, my study claims that sociocultural attitudes and particular beliefs about female bodies (discussed below) have constrained girls from engaging in weaving

practices, making them the lowest beneficiaries from the various work arrangements in the weaving economy. By implication, this has reinforced gendered power relations, with males earning a higher income because of their involvement in weaving and females earning a lower income due to working in those supplementary activities that are economically less valued (see table 6.2. above).

Similarly, the school survey also found a higher involvement of female Gamo students in supportive activities in comparison to male students – with the exception of spinning and embroidery.

*Table 6.3: Gamo students with supportive skills (age group 11-18)*

| ***Elementary skills*** | ***Male (n=208)*** | ***Female (n=139)*** | ***Total (n=347)*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) |
| Sewing Shawl (*Netela*) | 23 (11 %) | 42 **(30 %)** | 65 (19 %) |
| Spinning | 84 (**40 %)** | 29 (**21 %)** | 113 (33 %) |
| Twisting shawl thread | 8 (4 %) | 54(**39 %)** | 62 (18 %) |
| Embroidery | 23 (11 %) | 10 (7 %) | 33 (9.5 %) |

*Source:* author's survey, Addis Ababa, 2016

As can be seen in the table above, the majority of students in the sewing and twisting groups were female (respectively 30% and 39% of the respondents). Importantly, none of the female students in the above table were involved in weaving activities, a distinguishing feature of members of the supportive workforce group.

The income that members of the supportive workforce earned was relatively low. For instance, in 2015/2016, the value of twisting thread and sewing ranged from 5-25 birr per shawl depending on the size, the workplace,[6] and the type of customers (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016), while the value of spinning a hank-yearn (*Tuba*) was 5 birr in the same period. These income arrangements were also replicated in the women's spinners' cooperatives organized by the local government, thus facilitating the reproduction of this gendered division of labour in the factories. A local government report indicated that in 2014 in three

different factories in Gulele sub-city, 135 people were organized into seven spinning cooperatives where weavers', seamstresses' and tailors' cooperatives were also located (MSSE report, 2015). Women accounted for 96% of the members (130 out of the total 135) of the spinning cooperatives. This shows that the way in which the weaving economy is organized in the households and the value of different tasks in the urban Gamo society contributes to the reproduction of deeply unequal gender relations in the factories. Many of the women in this workforce category were mainly engaged in these activities to supplement household incomes earned, among other things, by selling firewood and working as daily labourers.

Moreover, as part of their gendered roles, the females in this stratum were also more involved in other reproductive tasks in their respective households, contributing to the reproduction of the labour force and the weaving economy. Their supportive activities (listed above in table 4) could be combined with many reproductive tasks in the households, with the result that girls and women, as is often the case, carried out multiple tasks at the same time. For instance, during a field visit to a household in Meketeya sefer*,* I observed a woman named Alemitu (approximately age of 45) twisting shawl thread while at the same time cooking and making coffee (field notes: Addis Ababa, 02-02-2016). Her spouse, Dagne (age approximately 47), however, remained focused on his main task – weaving. Young girls also practice multitasking, combining their work with their play. For instance, I observed young girls (approximately ages 11 to 14) in this same village combining different activities such as looking after their younger siblings and playing a game called '*Karre*' while at the same time twisting shawls.

Importantly, while females remained in the same workforce group, the males tended to proceed to the next workforce stratum as their skills progressed.

### 6.3.2 The practicing weavers (*lemaj*) / stratum

Members of this category are practicing weavers (*lemaj*) usually working under an advanced weaver and producing fabrics using learning-by-doing (explained in chapter 5). *Lemaj* weavers share three common defining features. Firstly, as elaborated in chapter 5, they are usually young males aged 11 to 16. Secondly, members in this stratum tend to reduce the amount of time they spend on spinning, other supplementary tasks, and reproductive activities as explained above. They thus put more emphasis on weaving. Several young weaver participants (21 of the 40, both sexes, ages 14 to 22) explained that it was always their mothers and younger siblings who were more involved in supplementary activities like spinning. Girum, (male weaver, age 15), for instance, stated that after he started weaving the previous year, spinning became his younger brother's (age 12) main activity (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 15-09-2016). Similarly, Meron (female weaver, age 18) explained that:

> I used to spin in the past. But I now focus more on the weaving and my mother spins for us – for me and my father (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 12-10-2016).

Likewise, Abera (male weaver, age 17) elaborated:

> A weaver does not spin. Someone spins for a weaver in most cases. To be a weaver, you initially start spinning and then you learn how to do tibeb melkem (make patterns). Once you know these, others spin for you. In my case, I usually outsource the work to spinners in the village paying 5 birr per hank of yarn (tuba) (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 05-10-2016).

The above quote illustrates a typical progression process to becoming a weaver in urban Gamo society. As highlighted above, in most cases this process works differently for males and females. While this skill progression is more common for Gamo boys, as explained below, this is not the case for the girls.

Thirdly, the members in this workforce stratum still lack some core weaving skills that are key to becoming an independent weaver such as warping and attaching the warp thread onto the loom. For instance, only

a few of the school-going informant weavers (3 out of 40) knew how to warp and could work on intricate designs (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). In addition, many of the informants (36 out of 40) specialized in producing just a few simple patterns (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). The most common fabric patterns they produced in 2016 included *Shimshim, Kesha, Zenbeba, Rigga, Ayine Bego, Fert, Aketo, mekes mit, Kelebet (ring)* (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

It should also be noted that there is an intergenerational difference pertaining to the skill level that young weavers possess and the speed with which they progress to the next skill stratum. Older generation male weavers were able to develop more advanced skills such as warping at the age of 16 or 17 and become independent. This is, however no longer the case for many of the younger, contemporary weavers. The current generation continues to produce simple fabrics as a strategy enabling them to combine schooling and weaving, with many school-going weavers having to delay learning how to warp and attach the warp thread to the loom (see chapter 7).

### 6.3.3 The skilled weavers' (*shemane*) stratum

In urban Ethiopia, a common name given to skilled weavers is *shemane* (literally: weaver). This stratum is mainly comprised of the majority of male weavers (usually above age 16) and only very few female weavers with advanced weaving skills. Besides producing fine fabrics, the *shemane* can perform some advanced sub-activities like wrapping and attaching the warp thread to the loom. As a result, they can work independently without anyone's support. They have, however, relatively limited skills with patterns. Weavers in this stratum tend to specialize in a few fabric types and designs in which they need further skill upgrading to become excellent weavers. Tariku (male weaver, age 17) explained that not all s*hemane* have equal levels of skills. He elaborated:

> By the way, the type of *tibeb* you know depends on the skill of your trainer (advanced weaver). If he shows you different *tibebs* and you work on these during your childhood, you become *tibebegna*. If you also spend more time with *tibebegna* in the village, you can be skillful in

> several types of *tibebs*. What matters is what type of weaver you spend time with (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 05-10-2016)

The above quote illustrates the skill variations among advanced weavers: While some are creative, others are relatively less skilled in making patterns. Those with lower skills call the highly skilled weavers *tibebegna* (artistic) hence creating another distinction between skilled and highly skilled weavers.

### 6.3.4 The highly skilled weavers' (*tibebegna*)

These weavers are very experienced and weaving experts, and have reached the highest level of efficiency, producing high-quality fabrics with many types of intricate designs. Many of them possess entrepreneurial skills including (re)creating new patterns (t*ibeb mekrese*) and modifying existing ones. Moreover, they can produce any type of fabric for the local market (including shawls, *gabi* (duvet), scarves, curtains, table runners, and dress fabrics) and copy almost any pattern. As there is a high tendency among weavers to copy each other's designs, some shop owners do not display some relatively new designs produced by *tibebegna* weavers in their shop windows to avoid copying. During a visit to Shiro Meda market, a key informant named Demissie (male ex-weaver age approximately 47) disclosed that some weavers call the patterns that are displayed in shop windows '*yetarede'* (direct meaning: slaughtered, literally meaning already copied) (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 26-05-2016).

Members in this stratum are usually Gamo youngsters and adults (usually aged above 20). It is rare to find female weavers in this category because of the gendered division of labour that I will explain later. Importantly, many weavers from the Dorze clan claim *tibebegna* status. For instance, a Dorze male weaver named Desalegn (age approximately 45) in the Gundish Meda factory mentioned that his forefathers from the Dorze clan were well-known weavers and trained other Gamo communities in the art of making designs (field notes: Addis Ababa, 20-09-2016). Several members of other Gamo clans also agreed with

Desalegn's statement that the Dorze weavers are quite advanced and creative. For instance, in a household at Shamma Sefer where six male weavers (ages between 17 and 35) worked, the weavers praised the Dorzes as superior and gifted in *tibeb* making (field notes: Addis Ababa, 12-12-2015).

Many of the highly skilled weavers worked in the newly constructed factories at Gundish Meda and Min tamir. A local government report showed that a total of 2,897 weavers (2,766 male and 129 female) were organized into 157 cooperatives and were working in the factories located on seven different sites of Gulele sub-city, Addis Ababa (MSSE report 2015). Working in factories, these *tibebegna* weavers had better links with export companies, modern fashion designers, and tailoring and sewing cooperatives in the factory and elsewhere. In particular, several of the weavers working in the Gundish Meda factory worked for exporters and fashion designers. In relation to this, Alemnew, a key informant (Head of Gundish Meda cooperative site, age approximately 47), explained that the weavers in the factory were so highly talented that they were even connected to export companies (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 25-11-2015). ). Emerging fashion designers have also started working with *tibebegna* weavers, blending traditional and modern fashions to produce everyday outfits without losing the cultural dimension of the fabrics. These designers are increasingly relying on the work produced by *tibebegna* weavers. For instance, a key informant (male, age approximately 50, a value chain expert from an NGO) explained that a company called *Ye Fikir Design* that sells fabrics on the US and Europe markets worked with 300 skilled weavers in Gundish Meda (KII note: Addis Ababa: 05-10-2015).

In many cases, *tibebegna* weavers do not sell their fabric at the Sunday market at cheaper prices (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). A few shop owners in Shiro Meda market pointed out that the prices for fabric made by weavers working in factories were higher than prices for fabric sold at the Sunday market which were produced by home-based weavers. These shopkeepers thus came to increasingly rely on these home-based

weavers. For instance, two male informants (shop owners) near the Gundish Meda factory stated that they rarely bought fabric from the factory weavers because of the price (field notes Addis Ababa, 24-11-2015). Likewise, sellers' cooperatives in Gundish Meda, which are organized by the local government MSSE and are supposed to purchase fabric from weavers working in factory cooperatives, preferred to purchase fabric from the Sunday market where home-based weavers sold their items at relatively cheaper prices (field notes: Addis Ababa, 21-07-2016). Ironically, this went against the local government MSSE plan of creating market linkages between factory weavers and sellers' cooperatives.

In a nutshell, the above analysis of the four workforce strata in the weaving economy shows that each stratum is structured on the basis of gender, age group, competency level, and social capital. As such, the more skilled weavers are the most independent and self-reliant, and have better linkages with the market. Importantly, this affects the social position of workers, thus shaping the social relations of production. In all four skill strata, gender has served as a key structuring factor, creating differences among the Gamo in male and female skill levels and the value of their work.

## 6.4 Gender and weaving skills

Several anthropological and archaeological studies have documented that weaving is a female-dominated occupation in many parts of the world (see e.g., Cosson 2017, Rossi & Russo 2017, O' Brian 1999, Pantelia 1993, Brumfiel 2006, Kellogg 2005, Schneider 1987). In fact, weaving has always been a component of the history of women's work (Kruger 2001: 22). Through their weaving work, women have contributed not only to the material production of fabric and family businesses (Cosson 2017); they have also played a prominent role in the creation and (re)production of culture through the making of symbolically embellished materials that represent their clans and social identities (Kruger 2001: 21).

In contrast, in urban Gamo society weaving is, by-and-large, a male-dominated occupation. As illustrated in table 6.4 below, male Gamo students were much more involved in weaving (31.3%) and spinning (40.4%) activities and less engaged with sewing (11.1%), twisting shawl thread (3.2%) and embroidery (11.1%). Female Gamo students on the other hand, were less engaged in weaving (2.2%), but more engaged in spinning (20.9%), sewing (30.2%) and twisting shawl thread (38.8%). This clearly shows that some activities are more female-dominated while weaving is mainly dominated by Gamo boys.

*Table 6.4: Key activities Gamo children perform (age groups 11-18, n=347)*

| Sex | (n) | List of key activities in the weaving economy | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Weaving | Spinning | Sewing | Twisting | Embroidery |
| | | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) |
| Male | 208 | 65 (31.3 %) | 84 (40.4 %) | 23 (11.1 %) | 8 (3.8%) | 23(11.1 %) |
| Female | 139 | 3 (2.2 %) | 29 (20.9 %) | 42 (30.2 %) | 54 (38.8 %) | 10(7.2 %) |
| **Total** | **347** | **68(19.6%)** | **113(32.6%)** | **65 (18.7%)** | **62 (17.9%)** | **33 (9.5%)** |

*Source:* author's school survey, Addis Ababa, 2016

The above finding from the school survey are complemented by qualitative interviews with young weavers: many young male Gamo weavers associated weaving with a masculine identity. Kalab (a male weaver, age 18) said:

> In our culture (Gamo culture), a Gamo man needs to know how to weave. If he has no other work and does not know weaving either, he is considered clumsy... (Interview quote: Addis Ababa, 16-10-2016).

In the above quote Kalab associates weaving with Gamo malehood, asserting that weaving in the Gamo culture is more related to the male gender. This has historical roots, as Gamo males have been engaged in weaving activities, migrating from the countryside to urban areas, over the past several decades (see chapter 4). In contrast, none of the female Gamo weavers and non-weavers attached their gender (being female) to the weaving occupation. Sara, a young Gamo woman (age 19, non-

weaver) from Meketeya Sefer, mentioned that it is uncommon (*Yaltelemede*) to see a female weaver in her village and if there is one, the female weaver would be considered to be doing male work (interview notes, Addis Ababa: 02-08-2016). Sara's view, like that of many others, expresses how some activities in urban Gamo society are gendered, with being male seen as an important structuring factor of a weaver's occupational identity.

### 6.4.1 Reasons for the gendered division of labour in the weaving economy

Sociocultural definitions and attitudes pertaining to masculinity and femininity contribute to the gendered division of labour in many societies (Evans 2004, Peterson 2005). Likewise, various underlying customs affect women's participation in weaving. Eber & Rosenbaum (1993), for instance, reported that for indigenous people in Mexico, a young woman's involvement in weaving shows a readiness for marriage. Costin (1998) noted that in societies where men largely control sales and marketing activities, women saw weaving and other craft activities as a means of accessing the market and getting involved in productive and consumption activities. In the case of urban Ethiopia, two key issues reinforce the reduced involvement of girls and women in the weaving economy. These issues are based on sociocultural beliefs, and attitudes to how weaving affects the female body.

#### *Sociocultural beliefs*

> '*Shemma yemitisera set telawa ayitafitim*' (literally: A liquor brewed by a female weaver is not tasty) (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 14-10-2016).

The above quote is from Meskerem, a female weaver, age 58, who worked in the Gundish Meda factory. The quote, which is a common saying in urban Gamo society, indicates the difficulty female weavers experience when combining weaving with other household activities. Undermining the quality of the liquor a female weaver brews, implicitly asserts problematic gendered essentialism implying that a female who combines weaving with other activities will fail to accomplish her tasks

effectively. Chaltu, another female weaver (age approximately 55) confirmed how common the above quote is among her generation, further elaborating that women were not appreciated as weavers (interview notes, Addis Ababa: 13-10-2016). As in many other cases elsewhere, Gamo women were expected to engage in other socially and culturally ascribed reproductive activities in the households.

Such social practices, as part of the gendered division of labour, were ubiquitous in their rigid forms in various Gamo households. During field visits, I usually observed males weaving or warping thread while females either made coffee, washed clothes, took care of young children, cooked or carried out supportive tasks such as spinning or twisting shawl thread. A field visit to a home-based workplace at Meketeya Sefer, where a woman named Adanech (age approximately 35) was making coffee to her weaving husband (approximately age 47) and two invited male weavers from next door can be seen as representative of many of my observations in households (field notes, Addis Ababa: 20-02-2016). In this household, Adanech's daughter (age 17) was sitting at her mothers' side, assisting with grinding the roasted coffee, giving water and running errands: all typical activities carried out by females in the households I visited.

### *Viewing the female body as unsuitable for weaving*

The second issue is a belief about weaving affecting the female body negatively. Biological differences in men's and women's bodies sometimes determine the gendered division of labour (Evans 2005). With regards to weaving, it is unverified beliefs about how weaving affects a female body that subtly limit the involvement of girls and women. Several female Gamo gave various opinions about this matter. For instance, Tarik (female weaver, age 16) stated that her parents insisted that she should not take up weaving because it will probably bend her back (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 14-01-2016). Similarly, another female weaver named Dimber (age 18) mentioned that she heard people in the community saying female weavers would face kidney problems (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 23-09-2016). However, Tarik

and Dimber continued their weaving work, exercising their agency, despite such beliefs within society.

Another common belief is that weaving causes miscarriage among pregnant women or hurts the foetus. Adanach (female weaver, age 16) elaborated:

> … For a woman, weaving is more difficult and may cause back pain and, in cases of pregnancy, she feels uncomfortable. Weaving may even cause abortion or may hurt the foetus as the female weaver bends to work on the loom for long hours (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 11-09-2016).

Such a belief was shared by other Gamo weavers as well. A male weaver named Geremew, (approximately age 47) in a home-based workplace at Meketeya Sefer disclosed how he insisted that his wife stop weaving when she was pregnant, fearing that she might have a miscarriage if she continued (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 20-02-2016). His wife, however, refused and continued weaving until the end of her pregnancy when bodily changes related to the growth of the foetus constrained her from weaving because of a change in the gap between the cloth roll[7] and her abdomen.

Furthermore, some school girls reported that they found it difficult to weave during their menstruation. Out of the 12 interviewed female weavers (aged 14 to 17), four disclosed that weaving became difficult during their menstrual cycle. The following interview dialogue with Marta (female weaver, age 17) illustrates her personal experience.

> Question: How do you see weaving work?
> Marta: It is not good for me. I do not like it.
> Question: Why?
> Marta: Because I am a female and my sex (*set bemehone*) makes it difficult. Particularly, after the age of 14, it is quite difficult.
> Question: Can you explain how?
> Marta: When my menstruation comes I get stomach-ache and bleeding. During this period, a girl requires rest not work.
> Question: Are you saying that weaving and menstruation do not go together?

> Marta: Yeah, because we weave sitting and as you may know, when your menstruation comes, sitting for long hours worsens the flow. At least, that is the case for me. And in the case of weaving, you cannot stop working until you finish a piece of fabric, meaning that you have to sit for a long period. Sometimes, you sit in the same bent position for days. This makes weaving difficult for females. Especially if there is nobody in the family who understands you (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 13-09-2016).

Marta's experience illustrates how certain biological differences between men's and women's bodies shape involvement in particular activities. This is, nonetheless, highly subjective, as women's personal experiences during menstruation might differ. Moreover, what Marta said at the end also suggests that it is not only the biology, but also the family and the social context in which both girls and boys live that matter in determining the gendered division of labour. As highlighted in chapter 3, due to my positionality as a male researcher, I found it difficult to understand and analyse the female experiences of menstruation and its implications on their work.

In a nutshell, the study discovered how sociocultural attitudes and beliefs about how weaving affects the female body contributed to a gendered division of labour in the weaving economy. As will be explained below, this shapes the life-course trajectories of young people, in particular their skills development and their social position as workers within the weaving economy.

## 6.5 Skills shaping social relations of production among different workforce strata

In the Marxian perspective, social relations of production are perceived as an important component of class position in which the capitalist class has control over the means of production and consumption, and the working class has none (Marx 1976 [1867]). The Marxian interpretation of the relations of production has little analytical relevance to weaving, as the simple handloom as a means of production eases entrance into the occupation. A key informant (male weaver age approximately 47)

elaborated that in order to start as an independent weaver, a relatively small sum of money (about 1150 birr/50 Euros) was needed for inputs like warp and yarn and to buy parts of the loom such as the heddle, reeds, and shuttle (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). To become a member of a cooperative and own a metal handloom,[8] a weaver would need to borrow 2500 birr (approximately 114 Euros) from Addis Microfinance, the local microfinance institution (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). This illustrates that rather than the means of production (handloom) and inputs, the most important factor of production in the weaving economy is labour. As shown above, the labour force is stratified based on structuring factors, with competences (skill levels) being more useful than other production factors.

Skill levels shape social relations of production in the weaving economy. In relation to acquiring skills, many adult informants (male) who started learning how to weave at a young age (13 and 14), mentioned that they needed to be independent weavers by their late adolescence (usually by the age of 18 to 20) (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Some claimed that they were self-sufficient at an even younger age. For instance, Alemu (male weaver, age, approximately 36) from Shamma Sefer elaborated:

> …. after working for a few years with my father and develop weaving skills, I refused to work for him and started working for myself at the age of 16 (field note summaries: Addis Ababa, 12-12-2015)

The above summary shows how developing skills at a young age can enable weavers to exercise their agency (in the case of Alemu, by refusing to work for his father) and setting up their own weaving enterprise. This is more common among male emergent weavers as, in many cases, they prefer to work for themselves and earn all the income at a young age (usually around age 20). In contrast, female weavers are always family-oriented, and prefer to continue working in their households until they form their own family. Male emergent weavers with no workplace have the alternative of becoming commissioned weavers, working for

employers and selling their labour-power. These employers are usually male traders from the Amhara ethnic group based in a place called Kechene. Young male weavers who sell their labour-power to these employers are locally called *Berari* (direct meaning: flyer, literally: contract workers). Nonetheless, as emergent weavers' work always has a market value, some advanced weavers prefer to retain their services longer in order to benefit from their labour-power. A rather notable strategy that these advanced weavers follow was not to teach their apprentices some key skills that could make them independent. For instance, Chane who is a migrant male weaver (approximately age 46) recounted how his uncle (advanced weaver) did not teach him how to warp 25 years ago so that he could work for him for a couple more years (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 16-12-2015). As a result, Chane had to learn how to warp from his friends later. As Chane's case demonstrates, starting an independent weaving practice is not such a straightforward process; rather it involves negotiations between emergent weavers and advanced weavers.

### 6.5.1 Negotiating to be an independent weaver

In the urban weaving economy, a key variable to completely free oneself from exploitation is the possession of skills. As explained in chapter 5, childhood learning-by-doing practices are instrumental in easily developing greater weaving skills. This means that early engagement in weaving practices helps to cultivate important skills, facilitating life-phase transitions and making young weavers independent.

In the weaving economy, as explained above, upward mobility happens with increased skill levels through a transition from one skill stratum to another. Once a weaver reaches the 3rd skill stratum, he/she can become an independent weaver. However, independent weaving is not such a straightforward process. Rather, there are always negotiations between advanced weavers and young emerging weavers. Especially if the young weavers are migrants from the countryside and belong to the advanced weaver's extended family or clan, they may find it difficult to start their own enterprise. This is because there are always reciprocal

relations between the advanced weaver and the emergent weavers' original families who look after the advanced weaver's land and other properties in the rural Gamo highlands. Thus, some negotiations have to take place in order for the emergent weaver to be able to become independent. Such negotiations happen in two different ways. The first way, more common among the older generation, was to send an elderly person to kindly request the advanced weaver - on behalf of the young weaver - to allow the young weaver to work independently (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). It is a tradition in the Gamo culture[9] to show respect to the advanced weaver who sheltered, gave training to and even sent the young weaver to school. This approach helped both sides to maintain their good relations and support each other when needed.

The second way, which is more common among the current generation, is for the young weaver to ask for an *Areb Eka* (handloom) for himself to start weaving or leave home to start his own enterprise (KII notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Referring to his two sons who started weaving for themselves recently, Kebede (male weaver, approximately age 55), expressed that young people now are wiser than his generation as they prefer to work for themselves rather than continuing to work for the advanced weaver once they have acquired all the important skills (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 12-12-2015). While 35 years ago Kebede had to send elderly men to his advanced weaver (uncle) so that he could work independently, his two sons (aged 21 and 23 respectively) who learned how to weave from him, did not follow in his footsteps; instead they simply told him that they wanted to weave for themselves and started working in a factory at the Min tamir site in September 2015. This illustrates the cultural change taking place in contemporary urban Gamo society, with young people increasingly starting to work for themselves without the intervention of the older generation.

In some cases, young weavers, whether part of an extended or nuclear family, might start working for themselves without notifying the advanced weaver. However, such a decision could lead to a dispute with the advanced weaver. For instance, Hailu (a male weaver of 16 years-old)

explained that his two elder brothers (age 24 and 27) who lived next door to their father (an advanced weaver who trained them how to weave) started working for themselves and keeping all the income from their work three years ago without their father's consent (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 13-09-2016). When their father found out, he was furious and stopped talking to them, seeing the action of his sons' as disrespectful. Indeed, his sons' actions upset the social order and threatened his power based on the superiority of his skills. The father died in 2016 without speaking to his sons; not even when he was on his deathbed. This case illustrates how skills play a pivotal role in shaping the social relations of production between advanced weavers and emergent young weavers and facilitate upward mobility in the weaving economy.

## 6.6 Factories and relative surplus value

In the weaving economy, the recent restructuring of workplaces (discussed in chapter 4) and the creation of a value chains between different producers was one key reason for the formation of relative surplus value. Relative surplus value is created either from the reorganization of productive forces in the form of technological change or innovation (a change in the means of production), or the reorganization of labour processes that includes the geographic concentration of workers (to create cooperation) and through increased division of labour (Marx 1976 [1867]: 250). Relative surplus value is always attached to improved productivity. However, if increased productivity is a result of improved technology, the value of labour-power declines as technology replaces it. This is not, however, the case in the weaving economy as the increased productivity was not a result of improved technology. Instead, as discussed below, it turned out that the value of the labour-power of weavers increased depending on their skill levels[10] with relative surplus value being created through the reorganization of workplaces, and with many *tibebegna* weavers moving from weaving to acting as intermediaries. Such a shift in weavers' roles

led to the development of sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements of various activities in the market. To maximize their profit and maintain a stable relationship with weavers who also had other market alternatives (such as working directly with shops and the Sunday market), the intermediary weavers increased the price of fabric using their social position as interconnectors between weavers and other profit makers.

### 6.6.1 Intermediary weavers and relative surplus value

Gamo weavers (both men and women and children) used various names interchangeably to refer to weavers who serve as intermediaries. Names included *adrash (*someone who takes their fabric*), aseri* (employer), and *delala* (broker) (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). However, the most commonly used name was *delala*. The *delala* were usually male Gamo weavers who, in many cases, were highly skilled (*tibebegna*), and in some cases skilled (*shemane*) weavers. Several male ex-weavers who developed their social capital and networks after the introduction of the factories also worked as intermediaries. The *delala* mainly worked by receiving orders from traders (shop owners, fashion designers and exporters) and sub-contracting and outsourcing the work to other weavers who worked in both home-based workplaces and factories. Customarily, weavers start working for the *delala* after receiving advance payment (*kebd*). This is mainly to avoid the risk of wasting their time and energy should the *delala* who gave the order disappear. Hence, the *delala* needs to have money available as capital to use for advance payments. An ex-weaver named Demissie (male age approximately 46) disclosed that a full-time *delala* needed up to 20,000 birr in start-up capital (910 Euros) (field notes: Addis Ababa, 21-04-2016). This capital is a necessary condition for the *delala* to be able to hoard valuable fabric for some time in order to resell it during a good market season. However, one cannot become a *delala* by only having money or capital. Another important prerequisite is the possession of some weaving skills as the work requires knowledge of different designs (sometimes to develop samples and to show the

weavers how to work on it), an awareness of input costs, and the socially necessary labour-time required to finish different types of fabrics.

Thus, becoming a *delala* is a form of upward mobility, in terms of income, for the weavers who generate better social capital. From this arrangement, the *delala* extracts profit (*ferk*) – another form of relative surplus value appropriated by the use of intellectual capacity (weaving skills), money and social capital. For instance, an encounter I had during field visits to Shamma Sefer where eight male weavers (age 19 to 35) worked and lived together, demonstrates the relations between *delala* and the weavers (field notes: Addis Ababa, 12-12-2015). During one of my visits, Adane (skilled male weaver, age 19) finished working on a fabric (*tibeb*). On his way out to deliver it, I asked where he was taking it. He informed me that a *delala* had subcontracted the work from him. When I asked for the price, he said he had not set it but expected to receive around 800 birr (31.80 Euros). Later, the research assistant (male, ex-weaver, age 46) who accompanied me on the visit informed me that the *delala* (named Sinishaw) is a highly skilled weaver who worked in the factory (Gundish Meda). The assistant guessed that the *delala* would sell the fabric for 1200 birr (around 55 Euros). Half of the weavers in the home worked with this arrangement with Sinishaw. At a later stage in the fieldwork, I met Sinishaw *(*KII notes: Addis Ababa, 23-09-2016). He explained that besides sometimes receiving work from government offices, he also had customers who exported fabric to North America (the United States and Canada) and Europe, namely, UK, German and Italy. Sometimes, customers might order up to 100 pieces of fabric in a couple of weeks or a month; in such cases, sub-contracting to the members of his cooperative and other weavers at the Min tamir site was the best option to get the fabric finished on time. He also noted that the majority of weavers in home-based workplaces were not t*ibebegna* and that he usually had to subcontract his work to weavers in the factories. In return, he received money (*Ferq*), a form of relative surplus value, from the weavers.

This involvement of a *delala* as intermediary has greatly shaped the market dynamics of fabric. An informant (male weaver, age approximately 45 and chairperson of a cooperative weavers' association at the Gundish Meda factory) explained that since the establishment of factories, most of the weavers working there have stopped direct sales to the Sunday market and shop owners because the *delala* gives them a higher price (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 10-12-2015). A few shop owners at the Shiro Meda market also confirmed the reduced market relations they had with factory weavers. A seller (man, age 41) at Shiro Meda stated that he rarely bought fabric from factory weavers because their price was higher than at the Sunday market – a market where most of the fabric made by home-based weavers is sold (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 25-11-2015).

Through sub-contracting arrangements, several home-based child and youth weavers (of both sexes) with design-making skills also worked for a *delala*. Information received via the semi-structured interviewes, showed that 13 of 40 young weavers (two female and 11 male) reported working with the *delala,* while the rest worked for shop owners and the Sunday market (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Many of these young people were aware that working with the *delala* was more beneficial than selling the fabric to shop owners or at the Sunday market. The following interview dialogue with a 17-year-old male weaver demonstrates this.

Q: To whom do you mainly sell your fabric?
A: It is for brokers (*delala*).
Q: Are they here in the village?
A: They are here in the village and outside of the village where I live. They work closely with exporters.
Q: Are they your close customers?
A: Yes they are.
Q: Which is better - to work directly for the market or for brokers?
A: In my view, it is beneficial to work for brokers.
Q: Why?

> A: First, it is tedious to move around and sell the fabric in the market. Providing fabric to brokers minimizes this burden. Second, they give a fair price. Third, when we work for the market, there is nobody to push us to work hard. But when we work with a *delala*, we do it seriously as the *delala* pressurizes us to finish the fabric on time. We try to do so in order not to disappoint the customers (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa: 12-10-2016).

The above dialogue illustrates how the *delala* reduces the weavers' efforts to find buyers. Using their social capital and working relationships with various actors, the *delala* even supplies weavers' fabric to exporters and other profit makers (such as fashion designers and shops). There is a difference in working for the market and for the *delala* as weavers want to satisfy the *delala* who gives a better price. This arrangement has greatly benefitted shop owners and other sellers as the *delala* delivers the fabric on time, something that is not always the case with direct orders from weavers.

Living in the village and knowing the weavers' workplace is an advantage for the *delala*, and makes it easier to monitor the weavers' work and pressurise them to finish an article. Consequently, through the constant monitoring by the *delala*, the socially necessary labour-time that weavers require to finish a piece of fabric has been squeezed. By implication, although working with sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements via the *delala* has provided weavers with more income, it has also exposed both child and adult weavers to increased time pressure which has affected their everyday lives. Yet this work dynamic and its implications on working children have not received attention from anti-child labour discourses and practices. This chapter, therefore, proposes the need for anti-child labour discourses to consider the implications of new working arrangements (in this case sub-contracting) on the everyday lives of child weavers.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Young peoples' involvement in productive and reproductive activities is structured by a range of cultural attitudes and practices that are subjective in time and place (Katz 2001: 711). This chapter showed the complexities of being a weaver by unpacking the gendered and intergenerational dimensions of work. It demonstrated that the weaving economy is not only about weaving but also about various activities and life-phase transitions in different skills strata. The chapter, in this regard, attended to the interactions between the local (for e.g., the gendered and generational division of labour) and the broader processes (i.e., promoting the private sector through workplace production) that shape skills transition. It showed that both the local and global processes reinforce the existing social differentiation in the weaving economy, reproducing gendered inequality making girls and women the lowest beneficiaries from the surplus value created in the weaving economy.

Furthermore, as argued in the chapter, the simplistic work-free childhoods overlooks the importance to children and young people of having skills in order to become independent weavers and free from exploitation. In the weaving economy, skill levels, gender, age and life-phase transitions are among the key structuring factors shaping social reproductive patterns. Yet child labour campaigns solely focus on child weaving activities. Such a focus on children's weaving is reductionist that overlooks life-phase transitions and the processes of cultivating greater weaving skills. Therefore, this chapter argued for the importance of understanding the nature of children's work and the key structuring factors for a better understanding of their work. Moreover, it claimed that policies that do not consider life-phase transitions across the different skill strata will adversely affect social reproduction processes in the weaving economy.

Nonetheless, social reproduction is about everyday lives and practices including schooling. By examining policies of the school system, the next chapter provides an analysis of the changing patterns of transition from

one skill group to another, explaining how this is influenced by the recent increase in school hours, necessitating young Gamo people to find ways to combine school work with weaving.

## Notes

[1] This work is mainly done by females.

[2] This is done using needles not machines.

[3] Among others, the types of products Gamo weavers produce include shawls (*netela*), scarves, *gabi*, table runners, dresses, curtains, plain challis, etc.…

[4] Value is determined by a wide range of circumstances; it is determined amongst other things by the workers' average level of skill, the level of the development of science, and its technological application (Marx 1976 [1867]: 29).

[5] Although young Gamo people could be seen doing embroidery, the dominant groups, particularly in the factories who pursued this activity are adults (both male and female) from the Tigre ethnic group who migrated from Northern Ethiopia (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).To develop embroidery skills, requires at least a month's practice. However, as per several non-Gamo informants (Tigrians), embroidery is work they do until they can transit into tailoring and sewing on a machine – a relatively rewarding activity in the weaving economy.

[6] In 2016, women working in the factory, twisted shawl thread for 20 birr to 30 birr, while in the villages young girls did the same work for 5 birr to 20 birr depending on the type of customer (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016).

[7] This is one component of a handloom weaving machine located on the front. It is used to roll the fabric as the weaver keeps making cloth. Usually, there is a few centimetres gap (approximately 15 centimetres) between the weaver's body (abdomen) and the cloth roll. When the woman's abdomen grows during pregnancy, the gap between the cloth roll and the woman's stomach changes. This makes it uncomfortable for a heavily pregnant woman to work with an Ethiopian handloom machine.

[8] This does not increase weavers' productivity, as the methods of production are the same with both the wooden and the metal handloom.

[9] Moreover, in the Gamo culture, bringing a child from a countryside and sending him to school, giving him shelter and teaching him how to weave are considered to be a form of payment.

[10] Nonetheless, it is equally important to understand that the value of weavers' labour-power is not always the same as the market for cultural fabrics is also affected by other broader factors. For instance, seasonality of the market, holidays and other festivities in the Ethiopian culture and the structure of

economy which is largely agrarian (with smallholder farming) have their own influences on the market (for details, see chapter 1, pages 9 to 11).

# 7 Schools and work: Understanding the implications of combining schooling and weaving on children's everyday lives

## 7.1 Introduction

Across the world, formal schooling is increasingly presented as a 'key agent of social reproduction' (Ansell 2014: 285). Likewise, informal learning practices have also contributed profoundly to social reproduction, reinforcing cultural values, occupational skills, and the gendered division of labour, thereby asserting social hierarchies (Demaine 2003: 125). As discussed in the previous chapter, as part of the established patterns of social reproduction in urban Gamo society, the process of becoming a weaver contributes to a cycle of reproduction of the labour force in which Gamo boys' progress from one skill category to the other, while the majority of female Gamo children remain in the lower skill categories. By implication, this has sustained particular relations of production and the gendered division of labour in the weaving economy.

Research has shown that learning practices (either informal or formal schooling) both reinforce societal values and practices, and break many long-established cultural practices and lifestyles (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990). In many western countries, for instance, increased formal schooling of girls and women led to high levels of female accomplishment in school. In turn, this profoundly contributed to a shift in women's role from what was once referred to as 'women's work' to increased work in the public sector (O'Brien et al 2005, Luxton & Bezanson 2006). This greatly affected the gendered division of labour, and thereby disrupted established forms of social reproduction and everyday practices (Demaine 2003: 131, O'Brien et al 2005). In many cases, the everyday practices within the institution of the family

contribute to the perpetuation of stable or altered modes of behaviour and relations (Pred 1981: 6, Katz 2004). In this sense, everyday life is understood as a key component of social reproduction. Importantly, in shaping many children's everyday lives and their social reproductive roles, schooling plays a significant role.

Schools are key places in which to control children's time, bodies, minds and involvement in different activities (Gallagher 2011, Ansell 2009b, Heissler & Porter 2013). Viewed in this light, this chapter looks at changes within the school system in Ethiopia. In an attempt to unpack children's everyday lives and understand the shifts in social reproduction in the urban weaving economy, school settings serve as the chapter's analytical focus. The chapter is a response to the fourth research question: how and in what ways do working children combine weaving and schooling and what is the role of schools in this? What views do working children and adult weavers hold about school work and weaving? By showing how state and non-state actors use schools to execute their policies and programmes (e.g., by extending school work), the chapter demonstrates working children's experiences of time poverty. In particular, the chapter elaborates on the roles played by NGOs, as part of their anti-child labour programmes, in claiming children's time and thereby regulating their bodies and minds by adding extra school work. Based on this, the chapter challenges the ideals of work-free childhoods, by showing that the recent increase in school time in Ethiopia has exposed working children to time poverty, and has disrupted social reproductive patterns by slowing down children's skills cultivation and thereby has prolonged their life-phase transitions, and thus deskilled young Gamo people.

In relation to school-work relations, the chapter takes a pragmatic view rather than a judgemental one, as the empirical findings reveal that for young weavers, combining schooling and weaving is a matter of negotiating with time – between the present and the future. Whereas young Gamo weavers see weaving as being part of the present and sometimes the future (if schooling does not lead to a job), they see

schooling as part of their future life in terms of the possibilities of a better occupation that it offers. Therefore, as proposed in the chapter, in determining school-work relations, the nature and intensity of children's work and schooling matters the most, not necessarily the type of children's work.

Importantly, in explaining how Gamo child weavers combine work and schooling and in understanding how working children and adult weavers value these, the chapter employs a generational perspective. This is consistent with the point highlighted in chapter 6 regarding the use of a generational analysis of life-phases for a better understanding of social reproduction processes. In so doing, the chapter explains, drawing from working children's views, how several working children aspire to employment in the formal labour market. These children do not, however, want to solely bank on schooling by sacrificing their weaving activities to it: weaving is a source of livelihood and acts as a safety net should schooling not meet their future aspirations. Besides, several children can only attend school because the income from weaving helps cover school expenses. For these children, schooling and weaving should be understood as complementary, although the recent lengthening of school times has created a tension between the two. Nonetheless, child weavers have adopted various strategies in response to increased school work and the need to create a balance between weaving and schooling.

From the perspectives of adults, the chapter discusses how many parents (and especially adult male weavers) also give priority to their children finding a formal job that can grant some level of social security. They understand that schooling is a requirement to realizing their aspirations of accessing jobs in the formal labour market, yet they are also aware that the promises of education may well remain unfulfilled as schooling per se does not necessarily guarantee formal a professional job in periods of economic and political uncertainties. It is for this reason that Gamo children and young people find it important to combine weaving and schooling.

## 7.2 Examining the relationships between school and work

According to Jane Dyson, there are three sets of arguments about the relationships between schooling and work (Dyson 2014: 54). The first argument originates from scholars in many disciplines including development studies, developmental psychology and economics, and the policy world. It is based on a perspective that is critical of children's work, a view that is dominant in policy discourses in particular. Work at a young age is considered harmful and as having a detrimental impact on children's formal education and academic achievements. Several studies in this line have argued that work undermines children's schooling (Psacharopoulos 1997, Patrinos & Psacharopoulos 1995, Woldehanna & Hagos 2015).

The second line of argument is more critical of school work. Some studies point out that the knowledge children acquire from schools generally suits life in metropolitan cities. This knowledge is irrelevant in many rural contexts and contributes to the deskilling of young people (Katz 2004, Punch & Sugden 2013, Jones & Chant 2009, Froerer 2011), and serves the interests of capitalism by reproducing a competitive labour force that suits the global capitalist economy (Bowles & Gintis 1976: 132, Close 2009). As explained later, this research has also found that by slowing down the processes of weaving skills cultivation and preparing young people for jobs in the formal labour market, schooling has contributed to the deskilling of young Gamo people.

The third argument takes a pragmatic view of schooling and work, seeing both as important to children (Dyson 2014, Bourdillon et al 2010). Some mixed methods studies show the complementarity of school and work. For instance, children's paid work is reported to be important for their school attendance, insofar as it covers their school expenses (Tafere & Pankhurst 2015, Maconachie & Hilson 2016). The major empirical findings in this study resonate with this third line of argument, showing that many children consider both schooling and weaving as having benefits although they have strong aspirations to what schooling will offer them in the future.

## 7.3 Children's aspirations in combining weaving and schooling

> …I am attending school to stop weaving…. If I work on weaving without schooling or I continue weaving after finishing my education, what is the benefit of schooling? (Interview quote: Addis Ababa, 15-09-2016).

The above quote, from Alehegn (male, age 16, Grade 9 student), illustrates the aspirations of young weavers to become someone better than a weaver through formal education. In many cases, the aggregate result of going to school was attached to obtaining a better occupation. Young people were aware that even getting a driver's license requires at least the accomplishment of first level primary education, something that was not the case in previous generations[1]. Their aspirations show that school is meaningless if it will not change their way of life and the means of earning an income in the future. In Alehegn's view cited above, when it comes to his future, formal education and weaving contradict each other because the essence of schooling is for a better occupation – not to end up as a life-time weaver. Likewise, Marta (female weaver, age 18, Grade 10 student) in the dialogue below reiterates Alehegn's view.

> Question: How do you see weaving work?
> Marta: It is fine as long as you do it in your spare time. Otherwise, if you focus on it and take it seriously, it is not good.
> Question: Why?
> Marta: Because you go to school for something bigger (*Letlik neger*) perhaps, better work in the future. Thus, weaving can be fine if you only do it in your spare time (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 05-10-2016).

The dialogue with Marta illustrates the salience of combining both work and schooling; but also gives more value to schooling – it might offer 'something bigger' in the future. In this sense, time is an important dimension as Marta juxtaposed the value of weaving and schooling in relation to different times (present and future). There are, however, cases which demonstrate that weaving can also be the reason that young

people are able to attend school. Tase (male weaver, age 17, Grade 10) said:

> I do not want to underestimate the importance of weaving as it is my current source of income and is helping me to continue my education. For some time I will lead my life with weaving. However, when I progress more with school, I will change my occupation because I go to school to get a better job in the future (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 05-10-2016).

Tase thus indicated how work and schooling are complementary rather than two opposing activities. Just as in Marta's dialogue above, a time dimension can also be picked up in Tase's statement as he links weaving with subsistence and supporting his school work (by covering school expenses) in the present time, while occupations perceived as superior to weaving come through education in the future. The views of many young weavers resonate with this temporal dimension – looking at weaving in relation to the 'present time' – both for subsistence and as a way of continuing school – and viewing education in relation to the 'future time' – ascribing a higher value to it. Nonetheless, young peoples' future aspirations are subject to broader issues such as the current increased difficulty for educated youth to find jobs.

In urban Ethiopia, as in many other contexts, educated youth have faced increasing challenges to finding jobs in the formal labour market. This increased joblessness has been a key difficulty for government officials and led to the revision of the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) policy in 2012 so that college graduates could also benefit from MSE schemes. The MSE programmes before 2012 largely targeted jobless youth with a low educational status. However, with the increased number of educated but un(der)employed youth, the government saw the MSE programmes as the main alternative to creating jobs for college graduates. Consequently, university graduates were encouraged to take up manual jobs like cobblestone and pavement making (quarrying), activities which were by-and-large unrelated to what they had studied at university. This phenomenon fits well with what Bourdieu labelled

'diploma inflation', to refer to the oversupply of diplomas compared to demand in the formal labour market, leading to a discrepancy between educational aspirations and actual job opportunities (Bourdieu 1984: 143). In the Ethiopian context, as elsewhere, educated but jobless youth are increasingly expected to create jobs themselves rather than look for employment opportunities. If they fail to do so, they are accused by government officials of being indecisive and lazy, lacking self-determination and vision (Di Nunzio 2015: 1192). Hence, as Daniel Mains documented, many educated Ethiopian youth resort to international migration to fix their 'temporal problems' of joblessness (Mains 2007: 668).

During fieldwork, I met young Gamo people (from a weaving family background) who graduated from public universities but found it quite hard to find a job in the formal labour market. Asaye (male, age 24), who obtained a degree in mechanical engineering from Arba Minch University in 2014 was one example (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Asaye's parents were peasants living in the rural Gamo highlands. Therefore, like many thousands of college-educated entry-level job seekers, Asaye had to look for a job in the urban area. He lived with his older brother, Belete (age 27), who was a weaver in Shamma Sefer. Belete dropped out of school in Grade 9 but was an established weaver living in a rented home. He even supported his parents, offering cash during his visits to the countryside for the *Mesqella* holiday. Asaye, on the other hand, did not know how to weave, and depended on his brother for a pocket money and subsistence. It took him over two and half years to finally get a job as a maths teacher in a private secondary school; work which was unrelated to what he had studied.

This demonstrates that, although the contribution of education to collective social change and progress is well-documented, it also offers little financial and material benefits for many young people in the short term. It even drains family resources in many instances. Increasingly, educated youth also have to wait for a prolonged time to transition into adulthood. Asaye's case above is a representative of that of many

educated youth in the context of urban Ethiopia and elsewhere, illustrating what Alcinda Honwana described as 'waithood' to refer to young people's state of limbo in transitioning to adulthood (Honwana 2012). Since the 1980s, the introduction of neoliberal economic policies and structural adjustment programmes, combined with local values surrounding occupational status, have made it harder for young people to gain the normative responsibilities of adulthood (Mains 2007). Although both Ethiopian children and their parents have remarkably elevated aspirations for education (Camfield 2011, Boyden 2013: 586, Boyden et al 2016), its ability to fulfil their aspirations is limited given the declining opportunities of finding jobs due to urban unemployment rates which are sometimes as high as 50% (Camfield 2011: 680). As such, despite young peoples' relatively better educational status compared to previous generations, linear trajectories of modern life through education have created false expectations about future life and progress (Mains 2007), leading to a state of hopelessness among the youth (Mains 2012).

Importantly, by looking at the growing number of educated but un(der)employed youth, several child weavers have understood the increased difficulties of securing employment in the formal sector. As a result, they do not want to bank solely on schooling by giving up weaving as a source of livelihood and an alternative means of income generation in an increasingly uncertain future. Arega, (age 16, and Grade 9 student) explained:

> I do weaving because it is an important skill to diversify my sources of income in the future – especially if I am not successful in my schooling (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 01-01-2016).

The above quote shows young weavers' pragmatic view of education, realizing that it might not fulfil their aspirations for the future. Likewise, Mahlet (female weaver, age 15, Grade 8 student) stated that weaving would probably be her source of income if she does not find a job in the future (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 06-10-2016). Her view further illustrates that while weaving is largely a male-dominated occupation, some girls also perform it in order to secure an alternative means of

income in the future. As explained in chapter 5, aside from helping their family, several informants ((11 – four female and seven male) – out of the 40 participants) mentioned that they practice weaving primarily for the sake of developing the necessary skills as a safety net for the future. These young people mentioned '*ye wede fit hiwot'* (future life) in relation to weaving (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). For them, the conventional, one-way formal education is not necessarily the only means of career development; rather, as they explained, informal learning-by-doing opportunities and the practices of weaving offer an alternative path for their future life. Viewed in this perspective, Gamo weavers' engagement in weaving in home-based workplaces illustrates a form of vocational training necessary to cultivate necessary skills, and experience and develop an important marketable skill that can rescue them from unemployment if they fail at school, or if schooling does not enable them to secure a formal job in the future. As such, as discussed in chapter 4, a formal TVET course in weaving is not the only path open to young people to develop skills: engagement in home-based workplaces also offers an opportunity for children to become competent weavers.

Yet, as explained in chapter 4, children's weaving practices have been mostly viewed through the lens of work-free childhoods in the post-1991 period in which exploitation of children by adults has increasingly become a hegemonic discourse in urban Ethiopia. This question of exploitation needs to be looked at based on who benefits from the creation of value (Ansell 2017: 368). In this sense, and from a temporal perspective, both weaving and education might offer little in the short term. In fact, weaving undeniably also exposes some children to exploitation and abuse from adults. However, this is not always the case, as more than half of the child informants viewed weaving positively. Moreover, as elaborated in chapter 5, most Gamo children and adults viewed child weaving as not only learning and doing, but also as a 'learning-by-doing' practice that needs to take place at an appropriate period (childhood) to ensure increased levels of competency later (see chapter 5). Besides, giving up weaving is an expensive sacrifice as

weaving was often the means of subsistence for the households in which children lived. Therefore, involvement in weaving is understood as a value-creation process as young people develop their skills and accumulate competencies that will enable them to become more skilful weavers – in many cases by the end of their adolescence. In spite of this, as I discuss below, many adult weavers increasingly value schooling, and look at what it offers their children in terms of future entitlements.

## 7.4 The views of adult weavers on child weavers' schooling

The generational interpretation of life-phase, as discussed in chapter 2, provides a well-grounded understanding of how children's work is viewed by people of different generational categories, and explains life-phase transitions, and the changing patterns of attitudes over time. Thus, consistent with the definition of generations and the generational analysis running throughout the thesis, I find it appropriate here to bring in adult weavers' views pertaining to child weavers' schooling and weaving. Highlighting adults' view, in this respect, illuminates priorities of change as people move through their life-course. For instance, as I discuss below, pensions and social security apparently become more important at later stages in a life-course. Yet to secure these, something must be done at a young age (i.e. attain a formal education).

A rather interesting finding of this study is adult weavers' strong aspirations for their children's education. This finding is similar to what other empirical studies in Ethiopia and elsewhere have reported (for example, Dyson 2014, Boyden et al 2016). Dyson (2014: 55) found that in parallel with an increased number of schools, parents in India put more emphasis on the importance of formal education for their children. In the Ethiopian case, likewise, a recent Young Lives study reported:

> Raised educational aspirations have led to an important shift in norms around intergenerational mutuality. Whereas in the past children's primary responsibility towards their families was expressed through their work contribution, performance at school is progressively more implicated in children's familial obligations, largely because education is

> perceived to be essential to both individual and family social mobility (Boyden et al 2016: 13)

My empirical material also resonates with the above findings. As discussed above, while child weavers value schooling because of its possibilities to leading to formal employment, adult Gamo weavers value both weaving and schooling in terms of the benefits they offer for future entitlements and security such as a pension (*tureta*). For several adult weavers, whereas weaving fulfils the need for subsistence in the present, schooling offers a formal job that provides some sort of social security in the form of *tureta* in the future. Bayush (female weaver, age 58) explained:

> …Who would give you *tureta* (pension)? It would be good if weaving offered a pension but, due to the absence of pension, schooling is better than weaving… (Interview quote: Addis Ababa, 15-10-2016).

The absence of social security undeniably undermines weaving, reducing its value among adult weavers. Many male adult weavers that I met combined weaving with other work. The most common formal job that weavers took on was that of a security guard in public organizations, because, as it involved shift work, it could easily be combined with weaving. Many such jobs did not require education in the past; but they do offer some *tureta* in later life. However, the opportunities of accessing lower level part-time jobs such as that of security guard have become increasingly limited for those lacking an education. Finishing primary education, or at least accomplishing the first level schooling (Grade 4 education), has become the minimum precondition in many organizations for low paid workers. This increased demand for educated people in the formal labour market, even in the lower positions such as security guard, has undeniably affected weaver's attitude towards education and themselves. Some adult weavers now view themselves as 'uneducated' or 'less educated' and regret their low educational status. For instance, Abinet (male weaver, approximately 46 years-old), a full-time weaver who lives with his wife and three children in a rented home, expressed his regret at dropping out of school at Grade 3 (field notes: Addis Ababa, 20-11-2015). He thinks that if something bad happens to

him such as a serious illness, his family will be trapped in a crisis as he has no access to social security. He thus encourages his two sons to put more emphasis on their school work rather than weaving as the latter will not provide social security if they face adversities. Likewise, an ex-weaver, Gash Gizaw (male age 78) pointed out:

> … Many elderly weavers of my generation at least possessed land which is a security in difficult times. I have friends who retired from weaving and returned back to the countryside to become farmers. If they need to and if they are frail, they can hire someone to cultivate their land. However, nowadays, all the arable land in the countryside is already occupied, with no land left for our children. For this reason, schooling is important as the job that comes through education will offer a pension in the future (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 25-08-2016).

The above quote shows that from a generational perspective, there is a shift in the way social security is accessed. Whereas among older generation weavers, social security was attached to and accessed through the possession of assets such as land, this has become increasingly difficult for younger generation weavers due to the lack of available arable land in the countryside. This in turn has shifted the views of adult weavers regarding the mechanisms of accessing social security. By implication, some adult weavers prefer schooling over weaving for their children as it opens the door to employment in public offices where pension entitlements are guaranteed and young people will have some sort of security in old age.

In a nutshell, the above discussion has shown that both schooling and weaving have their advantages and disadvantages in the present and future lives of young Gamo people, and thereby both facilitate the transition into adulthood. Although several Gamo children choose education for what it might offer in the future, they also want to diversify their future means of income through involvement in weaving. It is, thus, relevant to scrutinize the implications of combining schooling and weaving, to understand the tensions between work and schooling, particularly on school achievement.

## 7.5 The relationships between weaving and school achievements

To better explain the tensions between children's work and schooling, examining the relationship between work and students' school performances is important. This study used the school survey to look at the relationship between work and academic achievements and to compare the academic performance of child weavers with that of other students based on school-year repetition, the frequency of repeating a school year and academic rank[2]. The survey findings were complemented by qualitative interviews that provided deeper and more nuanced understandings of student weavers' experiences in combining weaving and schooling.

In the survey, the school-year repetition and academic rank – the two important aspects of school achievement – of weavers and non-weavers were scrutinized. The table below shows the level of school-year repetition among students (aged 10 to18 and Grades 4 to10) categorizing them in two groups (weavers and non-weavers).

*Table 7.1: Have you ever repeated classes?*

| ***Class repetition*** | ***Weavers*** | | ***Non-weavers*** | | ***Sub total*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | |
| Ever repeated | 21 (30 %) | 1(25 %) | 80 (28%) | 45(14 %) | 147 |
| Never repeated | 48 (70%) | 3 (75%) | 205 (72%) | 267(86%) | 523 |
| **Total** | **69** | **4** | **285** | **312** | **670** |

*Source:* author's survey with school-going young people, 2016, Addis Ababa.

As can be seen in the table above, class repetition was a problem for both weaver and non-weaver students. It is, however, important to underline that the number of female weavers who participated in the survey was quite small (only four) due to the absence of a sampling frame, thus making it impossible to see the effects of weaving on female students. Although this can be taken as one limitation of the survey, the results still illustrate the difference in academic performance between the weaver and non-weaver students, particularly for the male respondents.

In this context, the results show that, of the male students, 30% of the weavers and 28% the non-weavers repeated classes in the 2015 academic year. The overall result shows a slight difference between the weaving and non-weaving groups (2% difference among males). However, as students might repeat classes multiple times, looking at the class repetition variation of the two groups could better explain who fails more. The table below shows this.

*Table 7.2: If ever repeated classes, how often?*

| | ***Weavers*** | | ***Non-weavers*** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| ***Frequency of repetition*** | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | n (%) | ***Subtotal*** |
| 1 time | 15 (71.4%) | 1 (100%) | 68 (85%) | 37 (82 %) | 121 |
| 2 times | 6 (28.6%) | 0 | 8 (10%) | 5 (11%) | 19 |
| 3 times | 0 | 0 | 4 (5%) | 3 (7%) | 7 |
| **Total** | **21** | **1** | **80** | **45** | **147** |

*Source:* author's own survey with school-going young people, 2016, Addis Ababa.

As shown in the table above, the majority of both weaving and non-weaving male students repeated class at least once (71% for weavers and 85% for non-weavers). Students who repeated class twice accounted for 28.6% and 10% of the weaving and non-weaving male students respectively. This shows that relatively more weaving students repeated classes twice. However, it was found that none of the weaving students repeated classes three times, while 5% of the non-weaving male students did so. Hence, the frequency of class repetition among the two groups of students might be attributed to other factors than weaving. These results also suggest that a weaver with more than two school-year repetitions would end up becoming a full-time weaver rather than finishing schooling, whereas the non-weavers are less likely to become full-time workers.

Apart from class repetitions, looking at the academic rank of the two groups (weaving and non-weaving students) is also important to further understand schooling-weaving relationships. Hence the table below

shows the two groups' average academic rank in two semesters in the academic year 2014/15

*Table 7.3: Average class rank of students in the year 2014/15 (average class size of 50 students)*

| | First semester | | | Second semester | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Students** | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | n | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| Non-weavers | 602 | 14.8 | (10.1) | 603 | 15.5 | (9.8) |
| Weavers | 73 | 19.6 | (10.6) | 73 | 20.1 | (10.3) |

*Source:* author's survey with school-going young people, 2016, Addis Ababa.

As illustrated in the table above, while the mean academic rank of weavers was approximately 20th out of the average class size of 50 students across the year (in two semesters) in 2014/15, the non-weaver students' mean rank was 15th out of 50 in the same year, showing a five rank difference between the two groups. This result necessitates looking at the significance of the relationship between the academic ranks of the two groups. Hence, an independent sample T-test was performed.

Taking into account the difference in population size between the two groups (73 weavers and 602 non-weavers) as a limitation, this study found that there is a significant difference ($p<.001$) between the mean academic rank of the weaver and non-weaver students with a 99% confidence interval. This is consistent and in line with the difference in the mean academic rank of the two groups. Overall, based on the sample mean T-test result ($p<0.001$), the difference in average academic rank (15th for non-weavers and 20th for weavers from an average of 50 students), and in light of the slight difference in class repetition (28% for non-weavers and 30% for weavers), the survey results showed that student weavers have lower school achievements compared to non-weaving students.

However, the above findings from the school survey only tell a partial story. The qualitative results gained from the interviews with child weavers offered deeper understanding, as several school-going weavers reported being able to combine weaving with schooling without it affecting their school results. As discussed in chapter 2, of the

approximately 40 interview participants, 20 (17 males and three females) stated that weaving did not affect their school work (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Importantly, none of these had a history of class failure. One rather interesting view suggested that doing weaving only, without additional school work, could be boring – due, in particular, to the routine nature of the work. In this context, schooling reduced the workload of child weavers. An interview dialogue with Nardos (female weaver, age 16, Grade 7 student) illustrates this.

> Question: How do you see weaving work?
> Nardos: It is not that difficult.
> Question: Is it not exhausting?
> Nardos: It becomes exhausting in the summer season when there is no school because we do it continuously and then it becomes boring.
> Question: How?
> Nardos: Because doing something routinely every day is not exciting.
> Question: How many pieces of fabric do you produce during the summer season (when there is no school work)?
> Nardos: I produce seven to eight shawls per week.
> Question: How many you produce when you have school work?
> Nardos: Usually three shawls (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 22-09-2016).

As illustrated by the above dialogue, young people may find it boring to engage in only one activity all the time and therefore prefer the combination of work and schooling, implying that combining different activities is not always bad for young people.

The above survey results could not show that weaving was the primary reason for lower school achievements, as a similar percentage of non-weaving students (28%) repeated classes in the 2014/15 academic year, and the frequency of class repetition among some non-weaving students (5%) was more than double that of weaving students. In this case, as in cases of children elsewhere, the difference in students' (both weaving and non-weaving) academic rank and class repetition might be attributed to other factors. For instance, a Young Lives school survey result showed that about 24% of young people (of both sexes, Grade 4 and 5 pupils at primary school) from poor households in Addis Ababa

repeated classes in 2013 (Aurino et al 2014: 10). This survey further found higher class repetition rates in some Ethiopian regions such as Amhara that had about 34% student failure rates. Among the key variables that contributed to such high levels of class repetitions were teachers' professional quality, learning in the child's mother tongue, and the level of household poverty. Other studies also showed that, compared to richer households, class repetition rates were much higher among students from poorer households (see for e.g., Orkin 2013, UNESCO 2015).

Coming back to child weavers who attained lower academic results, qualitative interviews indicated that the nature of family relationships and the type of fabric they produced mattered in affecting school results. With regards to the nature of families, young weavers' relationship with the head of the household was relevant as a few (two males) who lived with abusive fathers disclosed that weaving and schooling could not go together and that they did not like their weaving work. One of the participants named Biniam (a 14-year-old male weaver and Grade 8 student) stated that his father always got drunk and forced him to work for long hours (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 13-08-2016). However, such problems only affected very few children (two in total), with the majority of the interviewees quite positive about weaving.

With regards to the types of fabric, those who produced complicated designs that required a lot of their time showed lower school results. As explained in the previous chapter, weaving involves the production of several types of fabric and designs with varying amounts of socially necessary labour-time required for their production. Viewed in this light, the participation of children and young people ostensibly differs based on their skill levels and the intensity of the work (the number of hours spent weaving per day). Those participant weavers who found schooling and weaving incompatible were involved in the production of intricate designs. In total, three out of four weavers (males) who worked on complicated patterns reported difficulty in combining schooling with weaving. Dagnaw (male weaver, age 16, Grade 8 student), for instance,

disclosed that, as he worked on various types of complex designs (namely, *zinar* and *sharko*), it was quite challenging for him to get good school results (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 28-10-2016). Similarly, Teshale (male weaver, age 20, Grade 8) who also produced *tibebs* such as *zinar* and *jano* said the following:

> Q: What is the effect of *tibeb*-making on schooling?
> Teshale: These two are totally incompatible. *Tibeb* takes a longer time to finish and makes your brain overthink, which apparently affects your concentration at school work (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 06-10-2016).

In many cases, young people start to work on complicated designs in mid-adolescence, around the age of 15 to 17 (see chapter 5 for details). Usually, this is also the transition period to secondary school, which means that *tibeb*-making does not jeopardize primary education but might affect secondary schooling, especially given the recent increased workloads and extended school times.

## 7.6 Schools, extended school time and 'busy' childhoods

Schools are important spaces of social control (Gallagher 2011: 48), serving as sites to regulate children's minds and bodies (Ansell 2009b, James et al 1998). It is in school settings that teachers supervise children and regulate their behaviour by using rules to encourage certain behaviours and silence others (Rönnlund 2015: 85-86). In this sense, interventions in school settings represent an exercise in power over children's bodies (Ansell 2009b: 33). In most cases, policy makers want children to spend more time in schools in order to increase their academic achievements and combat the problems of child labour. However, as I explain below, spending more time at school has its own side effects on children's everyday lives and their childhoods.

Time is an important instrument for schools to exert control over children's bodies and minds. In Ethiopia, the recent temporal expansion of schooling has created more time pressure on young people in combining work with schooling. As discussed in chapter 4, as part of the

broader process that puts 'access' and 'quality' at the centre of education policy, one of the post-1991 Ethiopian government policy measures was to improve the quality of education (*yetimihirit tirat maregagel*) and thereby address the problem of low academic achievement. In order to do so, the government increased school time from half a day to a full-day in its third Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP III) in 2005. This increased the amount of time pupils spent at school in urban areas by about 31% (Orkin 2013: 9). Schools in Addis Ababa all took on this full-day programme as it was seen as an important means of narrowing the gaps in school achievement between students, and of increasing reading and numeracy competencies (Aronson et al 1999). However, additional hours and days are expensive, affecting not only school budgets but also teachers, students, parents and a wide range of economic activities (Silvia 2007), and reshaping childhood experiences (Punch & Sugden 2013). As I discuss below, this is, by-and-large, also what child weavers experienced.

The increased school time affected working children involved in weaving by adding more pressure in balancing weaving and schooling. The young weavers (40 weavers, both male and female) indicated that schooling and weaving were their two most time-consuming activities in 2016 (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Between September to June (a total period of 39 weeks) students spent at least six hours per day (excluding weekends and public holidays) on regular school work. If children did not miss any classes, they spent a total of about 1,170 hours of allocated time[3] at schools during term time. Weaving, on the other hand, took up between one and seven hours (median=4.5 hours) of the interview participants' (both male and female) day, depending on the type of work they carried out (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 16-10-2016). When additional school work in the form of homework and studying was included, child weavers faced time deprivation, becoming relatively busier than other groups of children.

This is, in particular, more common among female weavers. In many cases, due to their involvement in additional reproductive tasks in the

households, female weavers feel more time pressure. Interview findings (n=40) showed that girls had more household tasks than their male counterparts. They had at least one extra (re)productive activity that they performed in their home while none of the male weavers performed tasks other than school work, weaving, and spinning. As in many other contexts, this shows that girls have more work to perform in the households besides weaving. Apart from this, by giving extra school work to working children (especially child weavers), various actors claim more of children's time and thereby created what I call 'busy childhoods'. This is explained hereafter.

### 7.6.1 Extra study time and 'busy childhoods'

The Ethiopian government's school lengthening initiative was not limited to full-time school hours. In some regions, additional study time was allocated based on Ministry of Education's guideline. For instance, according to a school official at the research site, the Addis Ababa Education Bureau introduced a new study programme called circle groups (known as *1 to 5*). This study programme, which was launched in 2012, has been implemented in public schools in various forms (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Under this arrangement, students are organized in groups (consisting of five pupils per group), and study together at a designated time in the school setting after regular school hours. The student with the best academic performance facilitates the study period. Attendance at the *1 to 5* study programme was mandatory for every school-going child. This meant that, as the programme ran once or twice a week – depending on the school's policy – students spent roughly 1 to 2 hours on extra school per week. This was observed during field visits in the research site in two public schools (primary and secondary). In 2015/2016, at the Entoto Amba secondary school, the *1 to 5* study programme took place every Tuesday from 4:00- 5:00 p.m. with around 420 circle groups (in total 2100 students). In the same academic year at Addis Zemen primary school, 140 groups with children in Grades 5 to 8 (in total 700 students), spent two hours every week in the circle groups.

Apart from this government-imposed extra study time, some NGOs also made a claim on a young peoples' time. Local and international NGOs operating in Gulele sub-city had a package of extra-curricular school work in the form of tutorial classes, as part of their school sponsorship programmes. A key interest of the NGOs was reducing the incidence of child labour in the weaving economy (see for e.g., Zegers 2013). This was mainly achieved by making students stay at school longer with additional schooling. Such intervention implicitly served as a way of disciplining children's bodies and minds to do more school work and stay away from productive work. Importantly, school-going child weavers from poorer families, whose livelihoods depended on weaving, were the main target groups of additional schooling. A report by an international NGO (World Vision), for instance, showed that in Gulele sub-city, Woreda 01, 237 young people (130 male and 107 female) from households with a weaving background and between Grades 4 and 10 were attending tutorial classes in April 2014 during the weekends (E-face project progress report, 2014: 4). Due to these tutorial classes, child weavers and young people from weaving families spent approximately – three hours extra at school every week studying Maths, English, Science and other subjects, adding up to a total of 114 hours yearly of additional school work in the form of tutorials.

During field visits that I conducted on Saturdays to the households, I could confirm that many child weavers attended these Saturday tutorials. Abinet a male weaver (age 46), for instance, made an appointment with me to visit his household at Shamma Sefer on Saturday so that I could observe him teaching his son (age 14) how to weave. However, when I visited the household, Abinet reported that his son had gone to school for a tutorial (field notes: Addis Ababa, 12-12-2015). Similarly, in a village called Meketeya Sefer, two young male weavers (age 16 and 17) were willing to take me to their homes and show me how to weave on school-free days but several attempts to meet them on Saturdays failed because of their half-day tutorial classes (field notes: Addis Ababa, 19-03-2016).

Additionally, summer tutorial classes (*Yekiremit Matenakeria timiherit*), organized by NGOs were provided in the localities at the schools I visited. Officials of two international NGOs (Good Neighbors and World Vision) reported that in 2016 they were actively working on educational support and sponsorship programmes with 2000 and 900 students each in Gulele sub-city (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Summer tutorial classes that aimed at improving children's academic performance were part of the package of these educational support programmes for child weavers. As the school support also included covering important yearly school expenses like uniforms, exercise books and school bags, parents or heads of households were interested in having their children sponsored as a means of saving on school expenses. There were two ways for the children to register for such educational support programmes – either by obtaining a certificate from the local government office (Woreda) declaring them to be 'the poorest of the poor' (*Ye' deha deha*), or by registering when the NGO community workers conducted household assessments in the villages.

According to two NGO officials, summer tutorial classes were provided to several hundreds of children for approximately three hours per day for about 38 days every week day in 2016 (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). This means that although the months of July and August were official school holidays, many children from weaver's families had to spend about 114 extra hours on academic work at the expense of other, non-formalized, learning outside of the school environment. As shown in the table below, the total amount of additional time child weavers spent at Saturday and summer tutorial classes was far higher than the government's *1 to 5* study programmes imposed on the whole student population.

*Table 7.4: Extra time on school work allocated by NGOs to working children*

| *No* | *Type of programme* | *Number of days* | *Hours per day* | *Total hours/year*[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Saturday tutorial | 34 | 3 | 102 |
| 2. | Summer school | 38 | 3 | 114 |
| | **Total** | | | **216 hours** |

*Source:* own calculation based on interviews with school officials, 2016, Addis Ababa.

As shown in the above table, many working children from weaving families spent 216 hours on extra school work (approximately six times more than other groups of students who were not required to spend extra time in tutorials and equivalent to nine full days per year). These tutorial programmes added an extra burden on children's everyday lives; even in school-free seasons. As the level of household poverty and involvement in weaving was relevant in selecting the beneficiaries of these tutorial programmes, those child weavers with more material poverty experienced more time poverty. However, showing how these children benefitted or lost out from this arrangement goes far beyond the scope of this study and is thus not examined. What the study does claim, however, is that with the extension of regular school time and additional tutorial classes in various forms, child weavers faced greater time constraints in managing school and work, were busier, and experienced more time deprivation than many other school-going children. Furthermore, as explained above, due to their additional reproductive activities in the home, female weavers especially felt more time pressure.

The above discussion demonstrated that weaving was not the only reason to overburden child weavers; rather, excessive schooling in various forms also contributed to their time poverty. This had not been the case in the past, when weaving was easily combined with school work. In the contemporary period this is becoming increasingly more difficult given the temporal expansion of child weavers' school work. However, as explained hereafter, working children had various strategies to combine weaving and schooling.

## 7.7 Children's strategies to combine schooling and weaving

While barring children from undertaking different productive activities seems logical at face value, under certain conditions it is not always realistic (Tafere & Pankhurst 2015: 24). For many children, combining school and work depends on how much time they have and how much effort the work requires (Boyden et al 2016). Besides, working children have their own ways of managing their time to combine school and work, although little is known about the strategies they employ.

Several of the interview participants (17 male and three female) described three different strategies to combine weaving and schooling. Firstly, they reduced the number of pieces of fabric that they produced during school term time. This involved a reduction in the socially necessary labour-time to the subsistence level, leading to reduced surplus value created by child weavers. Out of the 40 participants, 12 (five of whom were females) mentioned reducing the number of pieces of fabric they produced per week during school term time (interview notes, Addis Ababa, 2016). A rather extreme case in relation to this was Dawit, (male weaver, age 16, Grade 7) who, as mentioned earlier, produced 10 shawls a week during the summer (*kiremit*) but reduced this to three shawls per week when school started in September (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 15-09-2016).

Secondly, they gave priority to accomplishing take-home assignments before weaving. They did these assignments both at school and in the home. Children's lives are regulated by what Ennew (1994: 132) labelled the 'curricularization of children's timetable' to refer to the role of the state in dictating young people's time-use through extending school calendars to places outside the purviews of the classroom (see fig 7.1. below). In many cases, by intervening in family life through homework, the school determines how young people spend their time not only in the school setting, but also in their homes (Kovarik 1994: 114). In such a way, schools serve as key agents of social reproduction (Ansell 2017: 285). Furthermore, as explained above, this action by the state to control

childhoods is complemented by the intervention by non-state actors through the introduction of tutorial classes outside school hours.

Several of the child weavers that I had conversations with knew the far-reaching consequences of not doing homework. In particular, some of them had stories of dismissal from school and of class repetition. Thus, they gave priority to their homework in order to be able to continue schooling, even if they did not regularly study at home. Five weavers (four male and one female) said they would not weave unless they had finished their homework, and another three weavers (two male and one female) stated that they did their homework at school before going home (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). According to some of the weavers, doing homework at school was useful way to avoid being overburdened with weaving, school assignments and other reproductive tasks in the home. Furthermore, a few of the young weavers revealed that they did not find their home conducive to doing school assignments (see picture below).

*Figure 7.1: A 14-year-old child studying in the evening*

*Source:* picture taken during trial autography exercise of peers, 2016, Addis Ababa.

Several of the households that I observed during field visits lacked adequate space for children to study in. The households were in fact more organized for a weaver's life than for a students' life, with various tools here and there including pit looms (and some of them dug into the

floor), bobine machines and yarn laying tools (picture above). In the households I visited, I hardly ever saw a space for studying or the necessary furniture such as a desk and chair (field notes: Addis Ababa, 16-05-2016). Furthermore, as several of the weavers lived in rented homes, they shared the house with others who were weavers as well. These were the household conditions in which young people sometimes had to do their take-home assignments when they prioritized their school work. In this light, an extension of school time helped some children to find time at school in which to do their homework. As such, although increased time spent on school work might indeed lead to more pressure on children's time, it also ensures that some children can complete their take-home assignments, and thus do better at school.

The third strategy, the most common one among the studied children, was to work on simple designs and plain or easier fabric in order to reduce their workload and become effective at school. In 2016, of the 40 participants, 36 worked mostly on simple designs and plain fabric during school term times (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 18-10-2016). Although producing simple fabric can also be associated with children's skill levels, several participants reported this as a strategy to balance schooling and weaving. For instance, as a way of effectively combining schooling and weaving, Daniel, male weaver, age 17 (Grade 8 student), who lived by himself produced scarves with simple designs (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 08-05-2016). Daniel produced two scarves per week (the price in 2016 was 150 birr/piece) and he claimed that the income that he earned was sufficient to cover his weekly subsistence expenses. Likewise, Abel (male, age 17, Grade 7 student) who knew how to produce complex designs like *zinar*, worked on *gabi,* laying simple narrow patterns on the fabric as a way to balance the school-work relationship (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 06-10-2016). This strategy is not, however, without sacrifice, as several of the young people had to postpone learning how to make complex patterns and some other skills such as how to warp. In this respect, while we can speak of schooling as a form of children's work, we can also speak of

weaving as a form of learning (see chapter 5). Thus, the relationship between work and school is much less binary than is often assumed.

Importantly, by adopting one of the strategies explained above, some young people managed relatively high academic achievements. For instance, Temesgen (male, age 16, Grade 10) who produced two shawls with simple *tibebs* (namely *zenbaba, ayine bego* and *carta*) every week was ranked 1st in his class in 2016, and, in the 2015 Grade 8 national exam, his score was 87 percentile – one of the highest scores in the school (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 08-03-2016). I found Temesgen to be a very disciplined planner and skilled not only in weaving but also in time management. This is not, however, exclusive to Temesgen. As the three strategies outlined above demonstrate: several Gamo child weavers who adopted these strategies learned time management skills in order to combine schooling with weaving.

Nonetheless, as discussed in chapter 2, much of policy-related literature, which is drawn from the work-free childhoods discourse, highlights the incompatibility of work and schooling, obscures working children's agency, overlooks the skills that they develop, and seldom mentions the strategies that they employ to combine school and work (Ennew et al 2005, Bourdillon et al 2010, Tafere & Pankhurst 2015).

Likewise, as discussed in chapter 4, the propagation of anti-child labour campaigns in the weaving economy in urban Ethiopia was framed in the work-free childhoods discourse by the state and non-state actors. Over the last 15 years, different parties (government and non-government organizations) have become more critical of children's work in the weaving economy. This has contributed to the official labelling of weaving as a hazardous occupation by the Ethiopian government based on reports of child trafficking, exploitation by adults and some physical harm such as skin rashes and crouching (US DoL 2012). Nonetheless, although there are some cases of exploitation, this research claims that not all children have the same experience. Indeed, to conclude that combining weaving and schooling is harmful is problematic as it glosses

over or completely misses children's strategies in balancing work and school. It also overlooks the problems within the school system; problems which young people tell. Here is a good example from Dagim (male, age 16, Grade 6), who reported hating school work because of some rigid rules in the primary school he had attended (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 15-09-2016). Dagim was from a poor household making a living out of weaving. Like many other child weavers, he was sponsored by an NGO that paid his fees to attend a private school. The school had a rule that students had to wear other clothes (i.e. not the school uniform) every Wednesday. However, Dagim's best quality clothes were his school uniform as all his other clothes were worn out. He therefore always went to school in his school uniform on Wednesdays, a breach of the school policy. As a result, he was punished (whipping). Dagim said that he intentionally missed classes, and eventually dropped out three years ago. Dagim's story indicates the contribution of other underlying problems in the school system to explain students' school failure and droping out – it is not per se due to their weaving work.

Murray (2012) reported the inflexibility of schools in accommodating children's interests in all the Young Lives study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. She showed that there were even cases of children who were absent because of illness or to look after sick parents facing problems at school. Young Lives research pointed out that while many children in these countries combined work and school, through their rigid policies, the unresponsive school systems make it difficult for young people to access education, despite the children's commitments and their families' investments.

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the interactions of local (i.e., child weaving) and global processes (increased focus to education and anti-child labour programs) have created 'busy childhoods' in which working children experienced time poverty due to various actors' claims over their time by adding extra school work. In particular, NGO programmes

that are inspired by global ideologies of childhood and executed in the school setting put a claim on working children's time and serve as a mode of disciplining children's bodies and minds to do additional school work rather than weaving. These interventions to eliminate child labour have greatly shaped childhood experiences. Consequently, the chapter argued that the ideals of work-free childhoods have disrupted social reproductive patterns, slowing down children's skills cultivation and contributing to the deskilling of young Gamo people. However, for the young weavers and their poor households, giving up weaving for educational purposes is expensive. As a result, they have adopted various strategies, which should be understood as a form of agency, to balance school work and weaving. This chapter claims that while weaving could easily be combined with school work with the half-day programme of the past, it has become increasingly more difficult given the temporal expansion of school time and the various additions of extra-tutorial programmes.

Furthermore, the chapter argued that both schooling and weaving bring their own benefits and drawbacks to the children. Therefore, it embraced a pragmatic view on the relationships between work and schooling. In particular, the chapter demonstrated how being educated does not necessarily guarantee formal employment in the current Ethiopian context. Hence, in determining the school-work relationship, it is argued that the nature and intensity of children's work and schooling matters. Consequently, the chapter claimed that the recent labelling of weaving as a hazardous occupation is problematic insofar as it overlooks working children's interests and aspirations and their strategies in balancing school with work. This labelling also obscures children's agency in making their own life choices, with many of them wanting to work in the weaving economy, even in the light of increased time deprivation in the face of the recent temporal expansion of school work.

## Notes

[1] A recent Ethiopian proclamation that was passed in 2008 about driving licenses clearly states that it is mandatory to have completed at least fourth grade education for obtaining a motorcycle or automobile driver's license, and at least eighth grade education for a bus and taxi driver's licence (FDRE 2008: 4253). In both cases, the applicant needs to be above the age of 18. The proclamation states that these minimum prerequisites (based on education, age and health status) are a way of producing qualified drivers in order to thwart Ethiopia's relatively high traffic accident rate and to reduce both human and material destruction (ibid: 4247).

[2] This is a numerical ranking of students in a classroom based on their school results.

[3] The time students spend on educational purposes has three components (Aronson et al 1999: 7). These are allocated time, engaged time and academic time. Allocated time is the total number of hours and days students spend in school, including both instructional and non-instructional time, and break and lunch times. Engaged time is a subset of instructional time in which a time slot (period) is given to a particular subject but during which various activities including taking the register, disciplinary measures, advice and announcements, group work, and presentations take place (Silvia 2007: 3). Academic learning time refers to the actual time during which learning takes place within the period of instructional time. Therefore, the above finding on the total amount of time that children from weaving families spent at school can be referred as 'additional engaged time' as it only shows the added aggregate time that young Gamo people spent in school settings.

[4] This assumes regular attendance with child weavers not missing a single tutorial session.

# 8 Monetized childhoods

## 8.1 Introduction

Children's relationship with money and their financial decisions are more than merely an individual function; they are also cultural and social (Riach et al. 2017: 802). This chapter builds on chapter 5 and provides an analysis of working Gamo children's relationship with money and how this affects peer relations and thereby shapes childhood experiences in some specific villages in Addis Ababa. Against the background of the dominant African crisis childhoods narrative, this chapter uncovers a localized perspective of 'monetized childhoods', using money as an entry point. In so doing, the purpose of the chapter is to explain how the cultural practice of offering money to working children in the urban weaving economy has shaped their everyday lives.

The chapter specifically gives a response to the fifth research question: how and to what extent has Gamo working children's access to money shaped peer relations and consumption cultures in village settings? How do working children's consumption practices influence their childhood experiences and in what ways do they interact with the processes of globalization? As demonstrated in the chapter, offering money to working children in the form of *senbeta misa* (literal translation is Sunday lunch – this will be explained below) has become an established cultural practice in urban Gamo society in the last several decades. This has contributed to the establishment of spending and saving practices among peer groups, with children choosing how to spend their money - either individually or among peer groups, and exercising thrift. Consequently, the chapter argues that the work-free childhoods discourse is reductionist as it solely focuses on the productive dimension of children's work, overlooking young people's consumption

cultures and how these shape children's participation in various activities, and reinforcing young peoples' gendered identities in the village settings.

Village settings, which include specific sites such as playing fields, tea rooms, local cinemas, retail shops, street corners and youth centres, are important sites for children to see themselves as individuals and as groups. Furthermore, these places help us to look at the interactions of global and local processes and analyse how working children, through their consumption cultures, are increasingly integrated with the processes of globalization. In these places, key variables such as children's access to money, consumer items, gender, age and ethnicity intersect to influence and shape interactions among peer groups.

As highlighted in chapter 2, this chapter utilizes a sociocultural approach, emphasizing the cultural practice of offering *senbeta misa* (explained below) in the localities where children live, and explaining how these localized practices have implications on young peoples' individual and collective development. Young people's consumption cultures play an important role in reinforcing specific forms of masculine and feminine identities, as well as in shaping their involvement in weaving. Apart from this, through their consumption in specific localities, young people are increasingly integrated into broader processes of globalization.

The globalization of lifestyles has turned young people into a new generation of consumers (White 1996: 2). Conversely, the young have been 'discovered' as consumers by the market. Free-market economic strategies require not only new forms of production but also new modes of consumption and new consumers across different regions of the world. In this light, with the expansion of the capitalist economy, children and youth have increasingly become recognized as important consumption actors. This is evident, as explained in this chapter, in the new consumption cultures of Gamo peer groups in Addis Ababa. This is seen in the local processes that are linked to young people's involvement in productive activities in the weaving economy, and in the offering of

*senbeta misa,* both of which have been shaped by global processes through consumption patterns. These global processes include watching European soccer matches, and purchasing mobile phones and images of sports and movie celebrities to mention but a few. Importantly, in this global-local interaction, young people have exercised their agency, navigating different cultural resources, and giving rise to an increased consumption of commodities produced elsewhere (Nayak & Kehily 2013: 134).

## 8.2 Childhood and money

Working children's relationship with money and their consumption culture is under-researched in child labour and childhood studies (White 1996, Chaplin & John 2007, Cook, 2008). An early call from White (1996: 20) indicated that the consumption cultures and lifestyles of child workers constitute some of the least researched topics in the child labour literature. While Chaplin & John (2007: 481) highlighted the limited attention given to the consumption patterns of children's peer groups, Cook (2005, 2008: 221) also stressed the lack of attention given to children's consumption patterns in both consumer theory and childhood studies.

Much academic literature on working children focuses on the looming image of child labour as a corrupting force, thus blocking further investigation into children's economic activity and their childhood experiences (Zelizer 2002: 376). As discussed in chapter 2, working children are, in most cases, portrayed through the lens of work-free childhoods that promotes education, care and leisure for children (Ennew et al 2005, Bourdillon 2006). Historically, a work-free childhood model can be traced back to the ideological foundations of capitalist development in western industrial society (Nieuwenhuys 1998: 270) in which childhood was viewed in dissociation to production (Nieuwenhuys 1996: 246, Levison 2000: 128), and positioned at the centre of consumption (Cook 2008: 221). This served as an important

yardstick to measure modernity and (under)development (Nieuwenhuys 1996), and has contributed to the reproduction of work-free childhoods discourses in both academia and practice (Ennew et al 2005, Abebe & Bessell 2011). In these discourses, much emphasis is given to the productive patterns of children's work, with little research into consumption patterns. Nonetheless, both production and consumption are commonly understood as social processes that involve individuals in the (re)making and using of resources (Nayak & Kehily 2013: 135). Viewed in this light, an analysis of working children's childhood requires looking at their consumption patterns and their relationship with money.

Money plays a central role in shaping children's consumption patterns, and in rethinking both childhoods and consumer culture (Ruckenstein 2010). Compared to the Global South, in the Global North, children's relationship with money and their consumption culture have received greater attention from researchers (see for e.g., Zelizer 1985, 2002, Cook 2005, 2008, Ruckenstein 2010, Marshal 2010, Pugh 2011, Schor 2014). Thus, studies on childhoods in the Global North have presented young people as actors in the market with an undisputable place in western consumption culture (De La Ville & Tartas 2010). In contrast, studies on childhoods in the Global South have discursively framed young people in relation to socio-structural problems like poverty, HIV/AIDS, vulnerability and exploitation. In particular, the hegemonic discourse that presented Africa as the 'dark continent' lacking economic and technological resources to tackle poverty, equated the African childhoods narrative to 'crisis childhoods' (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi 2016: 304). This dominant narrative, as eloquently explained by Ruddick (2003), reads as follows:

> If I sift back through the countless images of the Third World that have confronted me through the media—television, magazines and flyers sent to my house—one persistent iconography dominates. This is the tight-shot close-up photograph of a single child—usually (apparently) not older than ten or eleven, looking, wide-eyed, directly into the camera. This photo is not a portrait: it does not communicate distinctive characteristics of the child. This "Child" comes to stand as

> the universal child of developing nations, disconnected from context, with few clues as to his or her culture or background. To the extent it is included, context simply signifies excessive and incessant labour and/or poverty. What I am asked to consider is this child's aloneness—his/her absolute dependence upon me as a funder, political supporter, or volunteer for his/her welfare. Support mechanisms—kinship structures, village context—are absent (Ruddick 2003: 341).

Such a view of childhoods of the Global South has pervasively impacted research, leading to a uniformly defined childhood with existential challenges, thereby calling for some sort of programme intervention for child protection and rescue operations (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi 2016). Although research on children's agency has expanded the horizons of childhood with increased focus on local perspectives (e.g., Chuta 2014), most studies on African childhoods utilize various analytical fields that are in one way or another connected to different forms of adversities. This is, for instance, evident in the international research by the Young Lives group in the last decade entitled 'childhood poverty' which studied childhoods in four countries in the Global South (see for e.g, Jones et al 2005, Hart 2008, Murray 2012). Similarly, phrases like slum childhoods, stolen childhoods, orphanhood and the such, display the African childhood in relation to poverty and vulnerability. As a result, little is known about the dimensions of an African childhood from the vantage point of money, consumption cultures and peer groups. Thus, this chapter aims to contribute to this rarely researched dimension of childhood using money as an entry point – among others by introducing the culture of *Senbeta misa* in urban Gamo society.

## 8.3 The culture of *senbeta misa*

*Senbeta misa*[1] is an explicit term which urban Gamo people (living in Addis Ababa) of different generations of (fictive) kinship descent and genders often use to refer to pocket money offered to children and young people every Sunday as payment for their involvement in the production processes of the weaving economy. The production processes include weaving, spinning, embroidery, sewing *netela* (a shawl),

or twisting *netela* thread. Gamo children and young people of both sexes, in most cases between the ages of 7 to 19 and household dependents, usually receive *senbeta misa* of varying amounts. In most cases, adult male weavers and heads of a household offer *senbeta misa* to the working children. Young people who receive *senbeta misa,* were either members of the household, or relatives that come from the rural Gamo highlands and lived under the roof of an advanced weaver developing weaving skills through learning-by-doing (see chapter 5). When young people start working for themselves (usually in their late teens), offering them *senbeta misa* ceases. Historically, Sunday has been the day of *senbeta misa* because it was the market day for weavers' fabric.

However, *senbeta misa* is not necessarily related to payment for work insofar as it goes far beyond a simple economistic explanation of wage for labour. As I explain below, associating *senbeta misa* with wages is reductionist since such a view overlooks the cultural and social elements in the processes of becoming a weaver. A 16-year-old migrant male weaver named Abera who worked for his older brother differentiated wage and *senbeta misa* saying that he received '*Eij kiray'*- literally meaning hiring skillful hands for wages (interview notes, Addis Ababa, 07-07-2016). Likewise, none the 40 informant children thought they were paid although they all received *senbeta misa* every week (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Put simply, regardless of blood relations with the family, as part of the cultural practice and production processes of weaving in urban Gamo society, a child that contributes to the household economy through involvement in weaving activities receives *senbeta misa*. As explained in chapter 5, several working Gamo boys and girls consider their involvement in weaving activities to be part of their responsibility to support their household economies. Furthermore, many others viewed their work as a form of vocational skills development rather than a paid activity. Based on this empirical evidence, this research takes *senbeta misa* to be a mode of motivation that children receive as part of the processes of becoming a weaver until they become independent weavers.

Offering *senbeta misa* has three subtle symbolic meanings. Firstly, it is used to communicate the successful sale of produced fabric (field notes: Addis Ababa, 12-05-2016). Weavers can only offer *senbeta misa* to young people if the fabric is sold. Here, questioning why the adult Gamo weavers have chosen Sunday to offer *senbeta misa* rather than any other days is salient. Sunday, as explained before, has historically been a market day for weavers who wanted to sell their fabric. In the past, weavers would not always sell all their fabric in the market every Sunday. For instance, an ex-weaver revealed that during the drought period in 1985, he could not find buyers for his fabric (*netela*) and had to walk from Shiro Meda to Mercato where he finally had to sell the fabric at half price (field notes, Addis Ababa, 05-12-2015). Hence, offering *senbeta misa* to the young people who had been working during the preceding days acts as a testimony to show that weavers had sold their fabric for a good price. During my field visits I noted that every Sunday the Gamo children that I met in the villages would expect the return of their fathers or other household adult weavers from the market to receive their *senbeta misa* (field notes: Addis Ababa, 18-09-2016).

Secondly, *senbeta misa* communicates and teaches Gamo children about the relationship between work and income. Variability in the amount of *senbeta misa* was quite common. When I asked how much *senbeta misa* they received, a frequent phrase young people used was '*Ende siraw yiwesenal*' (literally meaning: depending on the type of work). Those with more weaving skills and an extra workload received a relatively high *senbeta misa*. In low seasons and during school times when children may not produce as much, the *senbeta misa* offered to them would get reduced. A few informants confirmed this, stating that they received more *senbeta misa* in the high season as they produced more fabric. For instance, Chane, a 16-years-old male weaver from Shamma Sefer, explained that if he could finish two shawls per week, he would receive 60 to 70 birr every Sunday; and by adding one more and producing three pieces of fabric, he would be offered 100 birr (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 07-07-2016).

Thirdly, in the urban Gamo culture, *senbeta misa* contributes to young peoples' understanding of the importance of entertainment as part of the childhood experiences of weaving children. Through an offer of money, children and young people could, in most cases, enjoy time with their peers, spending quality time with them without parental supervision. In urban Gamo culture, it is customary for adult Gamo weavers to enjoy entertainment every Sunday afternoon and Monday. Monday is even called '*Yedorze Mariam'* (literally: the Mary of the *Dorze*)[2] by the Gamo people and other neighbouring communities to refer to a day of rest and entertainment. On these days, the *tej bets* in the villages are filled with weavers. Sometimes, finding a chair in the local *tej bets* at these times can be difficult (field notes: Addis Ababa, 31-07-2016).

Likewise, young Gamo people have found their own forms of entertainment on Sunday and Monday with their *senbeta misa* (explained below). Importantly, *senbeta misa* is given at the time that children take a break from weaving. However, because of this, Gamo youngsters sometimes miss Monday classes, preferring to take an extended break. This illustrates a clash between the school calendar and the entertainment and break times of Gamo children. Informant school teachers (one male and one female)[3] verified this, explaining that missing classes on Monday was more common among Gamo students than other groups, although both informants associated this with a lack of commitment and not finishing take-home assignments (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Nonetheless, both teachers agreed that with increased monitoring and penalties on truants, the frequency with which students missed classes was going down. So overall, *senbeta misa* gives young people a chance to spend money on specific consumption products, either individually or collectively, and interact with peer groups in various play and entertainment activities. As discussed below, this culture of offering *senbeta misa* and young peoples' consumption patterns have become common across several generations of (fictive) kinship descent.

## 8.4 *Senbeta misa* as a generationally transferred cultural practice

It is unknown when exactly the practice of offering *senbeta misa* to young Gamo started. However, recounting their childhood, elderly male Gamo informants who were in their early teens in the 1950s, explained that they received *senbeta misa* for their contribution to weaving, every Sunday from advanced weavers, usually the heads of households. Gash Berhanu (a 74-year-old ex-weaver), for instance, reported that he started to work as a spinner in the mid-1950s, and progressed to weaving at around age 12 at his uncle's workplace in Addis Ababa. His uncle offered him *senbeta misa* every Sunday in return for his contribution (field notes: Addis Ababa, 29-07-2016).

This 1950s was a few years after the introduction of paper money in 1946 as part of the post-1941 modernization processes in Ethiopia. As explained in chapter 4, with the development of peripheral capitalism in Ethiopia, in the 1950s paper currency was widely circulated throughout the country, contributing to the decline in the value of 'primitive money' such as iron bars and salt bars (*Amole chew*) (Pankhurst 1962: 213). Based on this historical evidence, this study shows that offering *senbeta misa* became a cultural practice in urban Gamo society after the introduction of a national currency in the late 1940s, insofar as the availability and increased circulation of currency by itself serves as a precondition to regularly offering cash to young people.

As in many other academic disciplines, interpreting changes in childhood demands incorporating the relevant and more general processes of cultural modernization processes, and considering how childhood is interwoven with these processes (Frønes 1994: 147). Societies as a whole are affected by historical changes, and, as members of a society, children's experiences and their childhoods are equally shaped by these changes (Corsaro 1997:18). Viewed in this light, *senbeta misa*, has played an important role in the way childhood operates in urban Gamo society since the late 1940s.

The practice of offering *senbeta misa* has been common across several Gamo generations of weavers. For instance, *senbeta misa* acted as one of the driving forces for young people to migrate from the rural Gamo highlands to Addis Ababa. This is partly because the consumption patterns it enabled in young, urban-living people involved in weaving attracted their peers in the countryside. For example, an elderly man called Gash Abate explained that his main reason for migrating to Addis Ababa in the 1950s was seeing his peers returning from Addis wearing shoes and modern clothing that he had never worn. Their consumption patterns thus attracted him to choose a life of weaving in Addis Ababa over a life in the countryside, thus illustrating how *senbeta misa* has served as a motivational force for Gamo children to become weavers and thereby contributing to the reproduction of weaving labour force (field notes: Addis Ababa, 13-07-2016).

This phenomenon has continued over later generations. Drawing from his childhood experiences, Tekelu (a 46-year-old highly skilled male weaver working in a factory) who was born and raised in Addis Ababa and started learning how to weave from his father at the age of 12, explained that *senbeta misa* was an important motivating factor among his peers to become a weaver (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 05-12-2015). Similarly, Mamo (a 45-years-old male weaver in a home-based workplace), who migrated from the rural Gamo highlands in the early 1980s mentioned that besides sending him to school, his uncle offered him 0.50 birr every Sunday for weaving (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 12-12-2015). Mamo claimed that the amount of money he received exceeded what his peers could earn at the time, so he spent more money on social activities, thus increasing his status among his peers.

Likewise, many of the current generation of Gamo children (male and female) working in the weaving economy receive *senbeta misa*. Of the 40 informant child weavers, 36 reported regularly receiving *senbeta misa* (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Of the remaining four weavers (all male), three worked for themselves and lived independently, and only one weaver (14 years-old) said he did not receive *senbeta misa* every week.

This boy, as explained below, mentioned that he did not need cash as his peers were from other ethnic groups and were less attached to money. Thus, offering *senbeta misa* to young people is an intergenerational cultural practice. It forms part of the weaving process, as well as the process of becoming a weaver, and shapes children's consumption patterns and childhood experiences. And, at least in the Addis Ababa neighbourhoods where this research was conducted, it also served as a basis for children's economies.

## 8.5 The villages, *senbeta misa* and children's economies

Like other villages elsewhere, the villages that I studied (Meketeya and Shamma Sefer) have many different sites where children spend their everyday lives. These include, among others, homes, tea rooms, playing fields, forest areas, streams, streets, local cinemas, youth centres, water points, retail shops, bakeries, *tej bets* and barber shops (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Exchange relations among children's peers and between children and adults take place in these villages. For instance, working children were the main customers of some women selling food items (e.g., injera, bread, bananas, boiled potatoes, fast foods) on street corners. As such, the villages serve as important sites of 'children's economies'.

'Children's economies' refers to young peoples' exchange relations, including the buying and selling of different items with money (Ruckenstien 2010: 398). In most cases, children's economies are created by adults' economic interests (Zelizer 1985). For instance, the very idea of a 'teenager' is a market invention rooted in the US economy. However, in the case of this research, children's economies refers to both adults and children's interests. In both cases, *senbeta misa* has served as a basis for children's economies, creating, strengthening and disrupting social ties among young people. As such, in some localities (including Shamma and Meketeya Sefer), young people of different ages and genders were involved either in exchange relations or in saving practices using their money.

With regards to meeting adults' economic interests, local retail shops owned by adults are the main suppliers of items such as balls, balloons (*figna*), *biy* (marbles), different types of sweets and chewing gum (including those with images of European soccer players and Indian Bollywood film stars) and many more items specifically produced for children. In addition, young people constituted the main customers of local tea rooms (that sold biscuits (*pasti*), tea and other foods), and households that sold frozen sweets (*jelati*). The profit from the sale of these exchange items usually went to adults.

In relation to children's common interests, children make profit out of exchange relations among their peers. These relations are facilitated by *senbeta misa*, and take various forms such as reselling their *biy* (marbles) and other toys, selling images of European soccer players, their pet doves (*erigib*) or other items such as shoe-shining boxes and watches to mention but a few. For instance, the following specific example of an exchange encounter in Shamma Sefer illustrates the relationship between children's economies and their agency. The exchange involved three boys (ages approximately 13 to 14) - the buyer named Menilik, his close friend and kin named Kasu and a seller named Behailu. Menilik had some money saved from the *senbeta misa* his uncle offered him for spinning. During the summer school break in 2016, Menilik wanted to start working as a shoe-shiner with his close friend Kasu (who was an experienced shoe-shiner) to earn additional money (field notes: Addis Ababa, 11-08-2016). From his street-based shoe-shining business, Kasu knew another shoe-shiner named Behailu, who was from a different village and who owned two shoe-shining boxes. Behailu was looking for a buyer for one of the boxes. Hence Kasu linked him with Menilik so that the two could negotiate and exchange. Finally, Menilik bought the box for 40 birr from Bahailu, cheaper than its price in the market[4] and started shoe-shining the next morning. I met Menilik and Behilu a few times heading to the streets of Shiro Meda market - their workplace - carrying their shoe-shining boxes. This exchange relation demonstrates how working children act as entrepreneurs through their involvement in

productive investments. It also shows how peers engage in bargaining through the valorization and transfer of value using money from *senbeta misa*.

However, exchange relations like these sometimes also become sources of quarrels among peers, especially if one of the actors changes his mind or if a disagreement ensues on the mode of payment. At one time, for instance, I had to get involved in settling a fight between two boys (ages approximately 13) at Shamma Sefer (field notes: Addis Ababa, 22-08-2016). These youngsters were from weaving families and occasionally spun in their respective households. They had made a deal to exchange a used Disco Watch for 10 birr and the buyer gave half the money promising to pay the other half in few days. However, he failed to do as promised and this became the source of their fight. Importantly, these exchange relations among children happen without the knowledge of parents.

Another key component of children's economies which represents children's interests and demonstrates Gamo working children's financial literacy is saving. Of the 40 informants, 15 (nine male and six female) reported that they regularly saved a portion of the *senbeta misa* they received every week (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). These young people used different saving practices. Five of them reported that they usually used small saving boxes (they call them banks) in their home, whilst two others had bank accounts in their own name[5]. Eight of them were involved in group saving with local peers called *Iqub*. Under this arrangement, the youngsters put in a fixed amount of money every week and receive their money on a rotation basis (revolving money). They usually used the saved money to meet several of their more expensive basic needs such as buying clothes, shoes and mobile phones. Interestingly, none of the youngsters mentioned that they saved their money with their parents. One of the informants reasoned that saving with parents is not a good strategy as he might not get the money back when he needed it (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). As discussed below, *Iqub* creates a form of social belongingness among peers.

Analysing childhood is a complex process, especially given the intersection of other key variables shaping young peoples' interactions and social belongingness (Frønes 2005). Importantly, this study found that the ways young people spend their *senbeta misa* is shaped by peers, ethnicity and gender. These are explained in the sections below.

## 8.6 *Senbeta misa*, peer relations and childhood in the villages

In childhood studies, examining peer relations is one key dimension to better understanding children's cultures (Frønes 1994: 157, Corsaro 1997, Konstantoni 2012). A child informant (male weaver, 16 years-old) said:

> My friends receive *senbeta misa* on Sundays for their weaving work but I always left home with an empty pocket. They could buy whatever they wanted with their money, I could not do anything except watch them. When they enjoyed a sweet, I rubbed my dry mouth…So, I thought and asked myself why I didn't work and get money like my friends? I then started learning how to weave (interview quote: Addis Ababa, 18-09-2016).

The above extract illustrates how money shapes relational processes and children's consumption cultures (Ruckenstien 2010). Through spending *senbeta misa*, peers identify their groups and solidify friendships. Corsaro (1997: 99) noted that friendship among peers is expressed through observable shared activities such as playing together. Similarly, the consumption patterns of peers also express their friendships. The absence of money could isolate young people from their peers. Watching peers buying something with their money, collective saving practices (*Ikub*) and receiving money in rotation, watching movies and European soccer (English Premier League, Champions League and sometimes the Spanish League), spending time in tea rooms or youth centres, eating in the local restaurant - all activities which require money -shape young people's relationships in their peer. However, as explained below, peer group consumption patterns also have a gendered dimension.

Most of the peer groups that I observed were of particular age categories, with little mixing across different ages. Nonetheless, other

than by age, in places like Meketeya and Shamma Sefer, peer groups were always organized based on three important factors: children's physical size, the proximity of their households, and their consumer items (field notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). Firstly, with regards to physical size, older groups (both sexes in their late teens) did not usually play with younger children who they considered *Chuche* (small). Being *Chuche* is not only determined by chronological age, although this is one factor: but also with being small in size. Hence, the children that I observed playing together were usually grouped by their physical size rather than chronological age.

Secondly, with regards to household proximity, many of the children come from neighbouring households. This was more common among younger children (those aged below 12) who I always observed near their homes. For instance, I rarely observed young people of Shamma Sefer and Chaka Sefer (there is approximately 500 meters between the two villages) interacting or playing together. In their normal day-to-day interactions and playful activities, usually children from clustered households in a particular area formed a peer group.

Thirdly, the type of consumer items children possessed matters in determining belongingness among peers (Zelizer 2002). Some of the objects that children used in play showed to which peer group they belonged. For instance, I usually observed specific groups of children (usually male and aged below 13) playing together with b*iy* (marbles). A child needed to spend 0.25 birr to buy a single *biy* and play with peers. On one occasion on a gray day at Shamma Sefer, I come across a boy (approximately 9 years-old) and his mother. The boy was crying loudly and stubbornly insisting that his mother (single mother) give him a few cents. During informal conversation, the mother disclosed that he wanted the money so that he could buy *biy* and join his peers playing on a nearby street (field notes: Addis Ababa, 16-07-2016). She explained that she could not always meet her son's needs, including the seemingly petty expense of buying a *biy* for 0.25 birr, from her meagre income earned from her work as a daily labourer in construction. This case

shows how possession of specific objects affects young children's play activities and their need for money to buy the objects needed to play with their peers.

In addition, betting with European soccer player and Indian Bollywood movie star cards was a common play activity among younger boys, roughly in the ages of 7 to 14 in Shamma and Meketeya Sefer (field notes, Addis Ababa, 09-04-2016). To obtain cards with sports and movie stars, the children had to buy particular brands of chewing gum. Local adult retailers who sell these items thus relied on children's purchasing power and targeted them as consumers. Older children (above the age of 14) considered spending money in such items as childish. These groups of boys (age well above 14) spent their time chatting, playing football, betting small amount of money, going to play station sites (to play TV games), and watching movies in local cinemas (field notes: Addis Ababa, 22-08-2016).

This shows that older Gamo weavers (aged 15-18) had different consumption patterns to younger children. One of the commodities that these slightly older youngsters have increasingly been attracted to are mobile phones. In urban Ethiopia where I conducted my fieldwork, mobile phones imported from China (in some cases locally assembled) were important commodities for Gamo boys in their late teens and bought with their *senbeta misa*. As a relatively new commodity, unknown to the older Gamo generation of weavers a few years ago, mobile phones were purchased by several of the young male weavers I spoke to. For instance, Zemedkun (male, age 17) and Kefale (male, age 16) from Meketeya Sefer, and Tarekegn (male, age 17) and Girmay (male, age 16) from Shamma Sefer possessed a mobile phone (field notes, Addis Ababa, 11-10-2016). These young Gamo men were integrated in the increasingly globalized world through the use of their mobile phones. For instance, one of the research informants (Tarekegn, age 17) maintained contact with me through the use of Viber – an internet VoIP message device - during my stay in the Netherlands in 2016.

## 8.7 *Senbeta misa*, ethnicity and peer groups in the villages

Working in the weaving economy, receiving *senbeta misa,* and ethnic identity are intertwined, shaping the social belongingness of young people and influencing peer relations in village settings. For instance, among the weavers, one youngster named Biniam (male, age 14) who did not receive *senbeta misa* explained how money and ethnicity played a role in choosing friends in Meketeya Sefer. The following interview dialogue with him demonstrates this.

> Question: How much '*senbeta misa'* you get?
> Answer: I do not receive that.
> Question: Why?
> Answer: Because I do not need it. In the past, I used to take some but not anymore.
> Question: You do not eat outside or play with friends?
> Answer: All my friends are Amhara[6] who do not weave and do not know so-called '*senbeta misa*'.
> Question: Are you saying your Amhara friends do not receive money from their parents?
> Answer: Yeah
> Question: What about fellow Gamo friends in the village?
> Answer: They receive '*senbeta misa'* because of weaving (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016).

The above dialogue shows how different ethnic groups living in the village near Shiro Meda had either regular or irregular access to money. Urban Amhara children, as reported by Biniam, had little access to income, in contrast to the Gamo children whose lifestyle was more closely linked to the weaving economy and *senbeta misa*. Involvement in the production process of fabric that has exchange value has given Gamo children more linkages to money and consumption - a rather different experience vis-à-vis other childhoods in the villages.

It is, nonetheless, worthwhile to underline that some activities pursued by young people are ethnically structured in the urban Ethiopian context, in particular in Addis Ababa. For instance, petty trading is commonly an activity carried out by children and young people from the Gurage ethnic group as they are more business oriented (Abebe 2008b:

280). Similarly, among street workers in Addis Ababa, lottery selling is a common activity among young migrants from the Amhara ethnic group (migrated from Gojam), while children from south-west Ethiopia (from the Wolayita and Hadiya ethnic groups) are involved in shoe-shining (Belay 2016: 154).

Further observations of children's play in the villages confirm how ethnicity, *senbeta misa* and peer relations are interrelated. For instance, at Chaka Sefer, I observed five Gamo children (in the age group of approximately 10 to 13) playing *biy*, betting with small amounts of money (0.25 birr per game), while a young non-Gamo boy (aged 11) called Dawit was just passively watching them. Dawit informed me that he was not playing because he had no money like his friends. When I asked why, he simply replied, 'because they are Dorze[7] (direct quote, field note, Addis Ababa, 27-07-2016). I further inquired how his friends' ethnic group could be related to money to which he answered that his friends' source of money was *senbeta misa*. I gave Dawit 1 birr to see what he would do with it: he immediately run to a friend who possessed several *biys*, bought a few and joined the playing group. I thus observed Dawit's position changing from a passive observer to an active player.

Zelizer (2002: 377) pointed out that money changes the position of children from that of passive individuals into active economic agents who participate not only in production but also in price bargaining and consumption. Money redefines young peoples' relationships, elevating their position to that of active agents in their playful interactions among peers. Importantly, money also shapes the way they identify themselves in particular peer groups. Despite this, receiving *senbeta misa* was not common to all children in Addis Ababa. As highlighted above, young people from other ethnic groups such as Amhara and Oromo living in the same villages as the Gamo children, did not share the cultural practice of receiving *senbeta misa*. This illustrates how belonging to the Gamo ethnic group and working in the weaving economy has created access to *senbeta misa* - influencing peer relations and young peoples'

consumption patterns, and thereby creating multiple childhood experiences in particular localities.

## 8.8 *Senbeta misa* and gender: the making of masculinities and femininities

In the making and unmaking of gendered identities, young people's consumption patterns are as equally important as their roles in production and distribution. Consumption goes far beyond the material; embracing the social, cultural and emotional aspects of people's everyday lives (Ruckendtein 2010). As a result, consumption practices strengthen a gendered identity of what is called a 'proper boy' and 'proper girl' (Nayak & Kehily 2008: 134). In such a way, consumption plays a role in the reproduction of masculinities and femininities and gendered practices.

In Addis Ababa, as in many other cases, gender plays an important role not only in shaping the types of activities boys and girls perform, but also in the amount of money they receive, and the way they spend it. Firstly, there is a considerable difference in the amount of *senbeta misa* females receive compared to their male counterparts. From conversations with 12 informants (all female weavers), I learned that the minimum and maximum amount of weekly *senbeta misa* girls received was 5 birr and 50 birr respectively (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). In contrast, for male weavers in the same age group, the minimum and maximum weekly amount was 25 birr and 200 birr respectively. Interestingly, I found that many boys were hesitant to disclose the exact amount of money they received: of the male participants, only 19 out of 28 mentioned exact amounts while the rest either did not want to disclose this information or mentioned receiving varying amounts.. Despite this hesitance by some to disclose exact amounts, I found that the weekly median amount of *senbeta misa* the child informants received in 2016 varied greatly between the female and male weavers; the girls received a median of 27.50 birr (approximately 1.25 Euro[8]), whilst the boys received a median of 115 birr (approximately 5 Euros). The amount of money boys received was thus about four times higher than that

received by the girls. Many of the boys considered this median amount of *senbeta Mesa* that girls received to be quite low. For instance, a male informant (14 year-old weaver) who received 50 birr every week in 2016 said, *'50 birr Min alat?'* literally meaning: What is 50 birr after all? (meaning it is small amount) (interview quotes, Addis Ababa 13-08-2016). With the 50 birr, however, boys could watch up to 15 European soccer games in the local cinema or youth centre.

Secondly, in relation to the way *senbeta misa* is spent by different peer groups, one key finding of this study is the rather contrasting spending behaviour of Gamo males and females. As found in this study, Gamo children's consumption practices play an important role in shaping their social relations in the villages and reinforce particular forms of masculine and feminine identities. In terms of reinforcing masculine identities, as explained above, for a considerable number of male Gamo children and young people (roughly above the age of 8), one important form of entertainment was watching European soccer matches, most importantly the English Premier League and some Spanish League games (field notes: Addis Ababa, 27-02-2016). Boys in the villages (Meketeya and Shamma Sefer) knew about key soccer players in Europe and chatting about soccer matches and players was a common practice. Getu, a male weaver age 16, from Shamma Safer explained:

> During my spare time and right after school (late afternoon), I enjoy chatting with my friends, talking about sports news, the sale of key soccer players in the European soccer Leagues and teasing friends who are fans of competing soccer clubs (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 20-09-2016).

Many boys like Getu were fans of clubs such as Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and Arsenal. For these youngsters, watching soccer every Saturday and Sunday in the local tea rooms and youth centres was an exciting childhood experience. The entrance fee (2-5 birr depending on the team playing and the place) to watch soccer matches was covered by *senbeta misa*. Importantly, this consumption pattern is a rather recent phenomenon introduced only in this millennium. Older generation Gamo weavers (males) did not spend their *senbeta misa* watching

European soccer matches. An informant called Tilahun (44 year-old male weaver) reported that he spent his *senbeta misa* on food, on watching Indian Bollywood and American Hollywood movies in a local cinema (*Video Bet*), on clothes and shoes, and to cover school-related expenses (field notes: Addis Ababa, 21-09-2016). In contrast, contemporary boys have added new ways of spending their *senbeta misa* to this list: by watching soccer matches, which emphasizes more of a masculine identity, they have become increasingly integrated in the processes of globalization.

In addition, boys (age 11-18) use their money for different games such as betting among themselves through playing joteni (table football) and gambling small amounts of money. The following image shows boys playing Joteni at Chaka Sefer in 2016.

*Figure 8.1: Young males playing and watching Joteni at Chaka Safer, Addis Ababa*

*Source:* image taken by the author during fieldwork, 2016.

Another form of male entertainment was football competitions and betting with peers in other villages. For example, during field visits to Chaka Safer, I observed male youngsters playing soccer for money - a form of betting (field notes, Addis Ababa, 15-07-2016). The amount these groups bet usually ranged from 1-10 birr. In contrast to younger children (age below 11), older groups bet relatively higher sums of money. Several of these boys spent a portion of their *senbeta misa* in this way, making the soccer games more competitive. One of the youngsters

(male, age approximately 14) disclosed that betting money makes the game more exciting. Furthermore, the youngster stated that, along with other boys in his village of Chaka Sefer, he sometimes bet relatively large sums of money - ranging from 100-500 birr - with boys from other villages. Similarly, an informant (15 year-old male weaver) from Meketeya Sefer, shared a somewhat similar story which shows how young male peers spent their *senbeta misa* on football competitions.

> Question: How do you spend your *senbeta misa*?
> Answer: I save it and spend it on football with my peers. We form a group of 15 persons (males) and save; when the money reaches around 2000 birr, we spend it on a football competition.
> Question: Is it for betting?
> Answer: The money is like a reward. There are rival teams and we play with them.
> Question: How much money do you bet?
> Answer: The stake is at least 1500 birr (approximately 68 Euros).
> Question: Wow, that is a lot of money. What do you do if you win or lose?
> Answer: When we win, we all go to a cafe and enjoy ourselves; when we lose, the winners do the same (interview dialogue: Addis Ababa, 25-02-2016).

The above dialogue illustrates that male Gamo youngsters' playful activities are core components of 'children's economies' as they perform what Cook (2008: 235) termed '(co) consumption' to refer to collective spending. This is different to the neoclassical economistic approach that often attaches consumption to individuals who purchase and use products and services (O'sullivan et al 1994: 244, Cook 2008). In this study, however, as elaborated above, *senbeta misa* can be seen as both a source of boys' collective spending and individual consumption.

With regards to reinforcing feminine identities, the ways boys spend their own money was considered inappropriate by the urban Gamo society when it comes to girls (field notes: Addis Ababa, 22-07-2016). Drawing on 12 months of field observation, I found that females did not spend money playing *joteni* (as can be seen in the picture above), to buy tea, or eat outside the home (field notes, Addis Ababa, 30-10-2016).

Furthermore, they also did not watch movies at the local cinemas (*video bets*), nor did they watch the English Premier League in the youth centres like the boys. Zenebech (age 17, Gamo female spinner) from Meketeya Sefer reported that a female who spent money and time in such places would be considered 'out of place' (field notes: Addis Ababa, 23-07-2016). This was confirmed by the absence of females in the youth centre I repeatedly visited during weekends when live transmissions of English Premier League matches was taking place. For instance, one Saturday visit to *23 Kebele* youth centre was striking as I observed only one female (aged well over 20)[9] among approximately 700 boys who were watching a soccer match between Manchester United and Leicester city (field notes: Addis Ababa, 06-08-2016). Furthermore, from multiple observations I found that girls were also not regular customers in the local tearooms like boys were. It was only in the *tej bets* that I observed a few relatively old Gamo women (aged above 50) sitting with men and drinking *tej* (field notes: Addis Ababa, 02-08-2016). These observations show that the everyday places of Gamo people of different genders and age groups in relation to spending *senbeta misa* were quite divergent.

These findings on young people's gendered spending were further reinforced through interviews with female weavers, none of whom mentioned using their *senbeta misa* to eat outside the home (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). When asked about how they spent their *senbeta misa,* the most common words females used were saving, giving the money to their mothers, buying clothes and shoes, and buying sanitary pads. In contrast, the most common words boys mentioned was hanging out with friends, having fun, exploring local cinemas, watching football, and eating outside. All these activities by the boys were performed outside of the home environment, whilst girls' consumption activities did not allow them to spend much time outside the home. Thus, boys' everyday places were more monetized, while girls always spent more time around the home, contributing to their families through involvement in household chores. For example, all the female weavers reported having at least one additional job such as cooking, making

coffee, collecting firewood, looking after younger siblings, twisting thread, washing clothes and sewing. In contrast, none of the boys were confined by additional chores in the household apart from schooling, weaving, spinning, fetching water (occasionally) and, in few cases, washing clothes (interview notes, Addis Ababa, 2016).

Hence, a key finding of this study when looking at the consumption patterns of young people when spending their *senbeta misa*, and their everyday places, is that females are more family-oriented, whilst boys are more leisure-oriented. For instance, three female weavers reported helping their parents with the *senbeta misa* they had saved (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 2016). One of them (a 16 year-old female weaver) reported that of the 250 birr she had saved in *Iqub*, she used 200 birr to buy shoes and gave her mother 50 birr who was short of cash (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 04-10-2016). Likewise, another female weaver (aged 18) also disclosed that she bought cups and other household materials from the 750 birr she had saved from money earned twisting *netela* thread (interview notes: Addis Ababa, 22-09-2016). Thus, young people's consumption patterns were not so much related to the amount of money they received, but rather to performing gender-appropriate activities in order to be a 'proper boy' and a 'proper girl' in particular localities.

## 8.9 Conclusion

The African childhood narrative is always equated with 'crisis childhoods' (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi 2016). Against this background, this chapter highlighted *senbeta misa* has created 'monetized childhoods', enabling working Gamo children to develop their own consumption practices among peers. The chapter argued that monetized childhood is the result of the interaction of global and local processes, in particular, because working children's consumption patterns have contributed to both the local economy (for instance: eating in local restaurants and buying consumer items from local shops) and the global economy (for example: using products manufactured elsewhere). As such, working children's consumption practices are not only localized experiences:

rather, particular consumption practices such as watching European football matches, Hollywood and Bollywood movies, or buying mobile phones, images of internationally renowned soccer and movie celebrities, shoes and clothes, have integrated young people with the broader processes of globalization. Importantly, young people have exercised agency through children's economies (buying, selling and saving among peers) and by deciding how to spend their money. However, Gamo children's consumption cultures have demonstrated how young peoples' everyday places become gendered, with boys being more leisure-oriented and girls more family-oriented. This has reinforced specific forms of masculinities and femininities, as the ways that young people spend their money helps them become a 'proper boy' and a 'proper girl'.

## Notes

[1] *Senbeta misa* is a Gamo expression for lunch on Sabbath/Sunday. In Amharic, it is also referred to as *(Ye) Senbet Misa* with slight difference from the Gamo expression.

[2] In the Ethiopian Orthodox church, St. Mary's day is every 21st day of the month on which some believers abstain from work to show their respect to St. Mary. Although *Yedorze Mariam* has no religious relationship with the church, the name is used as a metaphor for a work-free day like St. Mary's day.

[3] These teachers taught for over five years in two schools - a primary and secondary school (namely, Entoto Amba and Addis Zemen respectively) near the Shiro Meda market.

[4] According to these child informants, the price of a shoe shining box in markets such as *Mercato* was 60 birr.

[5] In Ethiopia children can open a youth saving (*Yewetatoch kuteba*) bank account with the commercial bank of Ethiopia

[6] This is one of the main ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

[7] Dorze, as explained in the previous chapter, is a name used by friends to refer to the Gamo people.

[8] The exchange rate for 1 Euro was for approximately 22 birr during this period.

[9] I did not talk to her because the setting at the time was not conducive to a conversation (too many people, lots of noise, and she was with other young male adults (approximately age 20-30).

# 9 Conclusions: reconsidering the ideals of work-free childhoods

## 9.1 Introduction

This dissertation emphasized changing childhoods, places, and work to explain the patterns of children's productive and reproductive roles across different historical periods in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia. The study set out to investigate the main research question: *How do the local sociocultural understandings of childhood and work interact with the broader political-economic processes in changing childhoods and children's involvement in different activities in the urban weaving economy in Ethiopia?* As shown in the thesis, although excess involvement in weaving work at a young age can be detrimental, early involvement in this work is equally essential to cultivate the skills necessary to become a master weaver. However, international anti-child labour discourses fail to take into account how a particular period in childhood is foundational for skills development, overlooking the implications of intergenerational and gendered divisions of labour, and working children's consumption cultures in reinforcing and disrupting social reproductive processes in the weaving economy. The thesis, in this respect, demonstrated how the coordinated efforts of state and non-state actors in promoting and executing the ideals of global work-free childhoods have led to the deskilling of young people from the important skills of weaving and have thereby contributed to reduced labour reproduction. In this context, the thesis's main argument is that the global work-free childhoods discourse is reductionist and over simplistic, failing to take into account children's bodily qualities and childhood abilities to cultivate greater weaving skills. The thesis claims that the proposed elimination of children's involvement in weaving work will effectively eliminate children from the production of hand-woven textile, as alternative Technical and Vocational Education Trainings

(TVET) are highly irregular (not offered on a regular basis) and unsuccessful. This study especially underscores that the Ethiopian weaving economy's future existence is threatened in the face of strong abolitionist sentiments towards child labour. The thesis, therefore, proposes a critical re-examination of the recent labelling of weaving as a hazardous occupation for children insofar as child weaving activities are more of a sociological and cultural phenomenon in urban Gamo society than a social problem.

This study, however, by no means wishes to romanticize all the socially and culturally accepted practices of urban Gamo society. It is worthwhile mentioning here that specific social and cultural attitudes reinforce the unequal gendered division of labour. In particular, due to problematic gendered essentialisms on the bodily differences between girls and boys, unequal gendered power relations are reproduced and social differentiation is enacted. As shown in chapter 6, not all children's bodies are depicted as suitable for weaving insofar as the sociocultural attitudes in urban Gamo society prioritize using the bodies of boys over those of girls for weaving practices. As such, girls have a constrained agency in involvement in weaving and progress in their skills development. Due to this, women mostly perform supplementary tasks (like twisting and spinning) while men progress onto weaving. By implication, as the different skills are valued differently, women have become the lowest beneficiaries from such a gendered division of labour, receiving the lowest share of surplus value created in the weaving economy. Thus although the involvement of boys in weaving is a more common sociological phenomenon in urban Gamo society, cultural norms equally segregate girls from advancing their skills, leading to the reproduction of social inequality.

Empirically, the study's intellectual relevance goes beyond the urban Ethiopian context insofar as it speaks to and challenges the dominant global work-free childhood's discourse – a mainstream development discourse on child labour that shaped both global and local policies and practices to eliminate child labour in many developing countries.

Importantly, this thesis demonstrated that the ideals of work-free childhoods is not only associated with specific anti-child labour policies and programmes in particular geographies; it also constitutes sets of broader polices that converge to directly and indirectly circumvent children's involvement in certain productive activities. Although the ideal of a 'work-free childhood' is mostly associated with a childhood model in western industrialized countries, childhood is seldom work-free in many of those countries. Despite this, the work-free childhoods has served as a yardstick of development and modernity in the mainstream social policy discourse (Balagopalan 2014, Nieuwenhuys 1996). Furthermore, as observed by several scholarly works, the dominant policy discourse of work-free childhoods has contributed to the promotion of a universal norm of denouncing children's work (see for e.g., White 1996, Bessell 1999, Ennew et al 2005, Bourdillon 2006, Bourdillon et al 2010, Aufseeser et al 2018). As children's work is mostly associated with poverty and vulnerability, further investigations into working children's childhood experiences are blocked with most studies on child labour providing only a partial perspective. By observing this gap, some scholars have called for further research that gives a more holistic picture (see for e.g., Aufseeser et al 2018, Abebe & Bessell 2011). It is mainly in reaction to these scholarly calls that this thesis has developed and used an integrated analytical framework referred to as *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing* to provide a more holistic picture of childhoods and work.

A holistic picture, in this regard, attends to both the material and the social relations of production, reproduction, consumption, social differentiation, and intergenerational and gendered relations that affect childhoods and children's work in particular geographies. Aufseeser et al (2018) stated that most child labour studies present working children as vulnerable groups who need protection. Against this backdrop, *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing*, has embraced an open view and a pragmatic approach towards children's work, rather than a judgemental worldview of their participation in different activities. In this sense, it has

served as a launching pad for a nuanced understanding of children's work, emphasizing its everyday and life-course dimensions, the material and the discursive, and the historical and the contemporary. In so doing, the framework has integrated two analytical approaches.

The first analytical approach is a sociocultural approach, embracing the concepts of agency and interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 1997, 2012), to explain children's learning-by-doing practices (Reese 2011), in their immediate environments (Rogoff 2003), and thereby analyse childhoods from an agency perspective (Vanderbeck 2008, Jeffrey 2012). The second approach is a feminist political economy approach which includes concepts of social reproduction and gender (Katz 2001, 2004), social differentiation (Weber 1968), generations (Kertzer 1983, White 2012), and age (Clark-Kazak 2009, Huijsmans 2016) that help to explain the effects of broader development processes (schooling, promoting the private sector, and anti-child labour programmes) from a structural perspective (Leonard 2016, Qvortrup 2000, 2014). By integrating the two approaches, the gendered and intergenerational dimensions of children's work, along with the processes of social reproduction and the changing patterns of childhoods, were explained throughout the thesis. As such, this analytical exercise is found to be insightful as it revealed multiple childhood experiences for the same group of children (Gamo working children). This is a contribution to the growing literature in childhood studies that seeks to disrupt the binary categories of local and global (e.g., Hanson et al 2018).

Importantly, to break down the analytical separation of the local and global childhoods approaches, the thesis employed the relational concept of place as a lens, following key scholarly works (for e.g., Massey 1994, 2005, Farrugia 2015, Farrugia & Wood 2017, Mannion 2007, Holloway & Valentine 2000). Place, in this regard, is treated in its physicality (Thrift 2003: 91, Gieryn 2000: 465) to refer to particular spatial contexts(i.e., schools, homes, factories and villages) and explain the interactions of local and global processes in those contexts, serving as the ontological foundation of this study.

In the following sections, this concluding chapter synthesizes the main findings and implications of the study along with its significance for policy makers and researchers.

## 9.2 Changing childhoods and children's work

In explaining changing childhoods and children's work, this thesis grounded its analysis in historical and contemporary processes. Drawing from explanatory events in three politico-historical periods, namely the feudalist period (1890s-1974), the socialist period (1974-1991), and the developmental state (post-1991), the thesis has shown changes in childhoods from what was once 'invisible' in the feudalist period, into 'crisis' childhoods during the socialist regime, and 'work-free' childhoods in the post-1991 developmental state.

Most of the country's policies and laws in the feudalist period, including the 1931 and 1955 constitutions, did not mention children and their needs in any way. Furthermore, children's work and their mobility for, among other things, work and educational purposes were unattended to by both state and non-state actors. In fact, childhood migratory practices were normal and viewed by the larger Gamo society as a rite of passage - a transition from childhood into young adulthood. Working in Addis Ababa under the guidance of an advanced weaver with a (fictive) kinship relation was considered a scholarship opportunity and a vocational journey to cultivate weaving skills.

This practice was reinforced by broader processes of policy change in the feudalist period. Among others, one key policy was to bring about modernization through different programmes such as the consolidation of financial institutions (banks), increased education, and the establishment of privately-owned industries (Markakis 1978). These policies were inspired by the trends in global processes of change in the post-second world war period - characterized by the rise of modernization theory as a panacea for poverty eradication in the Global South (Bernstein 1971). Importantly, increased circulation and usage of a national currency throughout Ethiopia in the late 1940s and 1950s

contributed to the introduction of exchange value in the weaving economy. Payments in kind through bartering and the use of primitive money were consequently replaced by exchange through a national currency (paper money). With the introduction of exchange value, providing pocket money in the form of *senbeta misa* to working children started in Addis Ababa where the Gamo weavers lived. As a result, urban Gamo childhoods were transformed into what I called 'monetized childhoods' (see chapter 8).

In tandem with this development, weaving continued to be a relatively prestigious occupation in the rural Gamo highlands, the Gamo people's place of origin. This was due mainly to the increased spending patterns of urban-living weavers, which they showed during their visits in the countryside, thus encouraging the migration of Gamo boys to Addis Ababa to become weavers. However, due to sociocultural attitudes towards despised handicrafts, including weaving, weavers' status in the urban areas such as Addis Ababa was quite the opposite of what it was in the rural areas. Weavers constituted a minority group of artisans who were looked down on for the mere fact of being weavers. This contributed to a geographic concentration of weavers leading to the development of natural clusters that are still visible in parts of Addis Ababa.

Likewise, throughout the socialist period, children's work and their mobility from place to place was not much of an issue for either government officials or policy makers. Nonetheless, the Ethiopian childhoods discourse transformed from 'invisible' into a 'crisis' childhoods due to broader processes associated with the Cold War, including Ethiopia's alliance with the former USSR, and the concomitant political crisis followed by a prolonged civil war, recurrent droughts, and the 1980s famine in northern Ethiopia. Ever since, often filtered through the international media, a crisis childhoods discourse has continued to be the dominant narrative of childhoods in Ethiopia and even more broadly in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the post-1991 developmental state, a profound change in Ethiopian childhoods, as well as in the more local Gamo childhoods, was recorded. In this case the key contributing factors were mainly associated with the convergence of a range of interacting global processes, rather than a single policy, that were executed in particular localities. These global processes include efforts to universalize education as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the global anti-child labour campaigns subsequent to the establishment of IPEC in 1992, and a neoliberal agenda of promoting the private sector. Shaped by these global processes, national level developments include Ethiopia's ratification of the ILO Minimum Age Convention 138, the 2001 anti-child labour survey and its concomitant effects on anti-child labour programmes, an impressive rural school expansion programme, and increased enterprise development initiatives. The effects of all these on working Gamo children were visible and greatly contributed to the introduction and reproduction of the work-free childhoods discourse. In 2011, weaving, which had been a normal occupation for children for most of the 20th century, was labelled as a hazardous occupation for the first time (Pankhurst et al 2015), and increasingly denounced by both state and non-state actors (for e.g., US Dol 2012). Importantly, the work-free childhoods discourse became an extension of the crisis childhoods narrative because children's involvement in productive activities is often associated with poverty, adversities and vulnerability in the Global South (for e.g., ILO 2017). With the creation and reproduction of specific policy and practice discourses, the work-free childhoods narrative has hardened. Discourses such as g*ulbet bizbeza* (labour exploitation), h*igewet ziwuwer* (trafficking) and g*inizabe maschebet* (awareness creation), which were unknown a few years ago, have become ubiquitous in recent times in Addis Ababa, in the localities where this research was conducted.

Consequently, the impacts of work-free childhoods have become visible in the changing discourses of local childhoods and have even created different childhood experiences such as busy childhoods (chapter 7). As shown throughout the thesis, as a component of the global

processes, the ideals of work-free childhoods have come to shape children's everyday lives and localized sociocultural practices. In their localities, children have responded to these global processes in their own ways.

## 9.3 The implications of using place in the analysis of local-global childhoods

The main implication of analysing the interactions of local and global childhoods through the lens place is that such an analytical exercise reveals multiple childhood experiences for the same groups of working children, depending on the spatial context where social policy and cultural practices are enacted. Furthermore, as place and time are intertwined, this analytical exercise also helps to explain the changes in childhoods across time. This thesis has specifically shown the changes in the everyday lives of working children along with the multiple childhood experiences that are produced by the interactions between local and global processes. The thesis accomplished this analytical exercise by taking four spatial contexts (i.e. schools, homes, factories and villages).

The first spatial context, school, serves as an important site in which the interplay between global, national, and local forces is observed. In this sense, the actual practice of schooling is shaped by global policies of 'access' and 'quality' education, as well as by anti-child labour programmes. Yet the curriculum is distinctly Ethiopian and it is also local in the sense that teachers and students are often from the direct surroundings. As argued in this thesis, extra school time for child weavers that requires them to spend more time in the school setting has changed Gamo childhoods, mainly by exposing children to time poverty, slowing down the speed of skills acquisition, and deskilling them in their weaving work. Children now spend more time on schooling because of a recent increase in school time from half a day to a full-day (adding 31% more school work every day), and additional tutorials introduced by NGO anti-child labour programmes that targeted Gamo children working in the weaving economy. Changing temporality, as shown in

chapter 7, has reorganized children's everyday material and social lives, thus restructuring their childhoods. In comparison to older generation weavers, several of the contemporary Gamo children delay cultivating some important weaving skills due to increased school time. However, the reaction of child weavers to this changed temporality due to increased school work has been pragmatic; they have developed various strategies to combine weaving and schooling (such as giving priority to take-home assignments and finishing school work in the school setting). These strategies by children in reaction to the changed temporality are understood as forms of agency.

In Ethiopia, the value of modern education for societal change was recognized during the imperial period and continued to grow in the socialist period. In particular, public consciousness and the widespread literacy campaigns of the socialist period played an important role in increasing the value of education in urban and rural societies. Many of the Gamo children of the socialist period, who are weavers in the contemporary period, experienced at least some years of primary education. However, a prolonged civil war and limited resources contributed to sluggish school expansion - far less that the progress in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the plans of the socialist regime to introduce compulsory education never materialized due to the severe scarcity of schools throughout the country. As a result, many Ethiopian children, including Gamo children working in the weaving economy, were barely able to finish primary education.

A profound change in school expansion is recorded in the post-1991 developmental state. In particular, the material expansion of schools in the rural Gamo highlands over the last 15 years (a more than three-fold increase) has reduced the level of children's mobility from the countryside to Addis Ababa for the sake of education. With the aim of slashing school dropout rates, rural schools in the Gamo highlands became increasingly involved in monitoring the mobility of children and young people below the age of 18. Policing young peoples' mobility from the Gamo highlands to the urban settings further intensified in the new

millennium. In this regard, the restrictive measures taken by schools have converged with NGOs' anti-child labour and trafficking programmes and campaigns which were set up in the early 2000s following the contested national child labour survey in 2001. The convergence of increased schooling and anti-child labour programmes has brought together different state and non-state development actors (schools, local government officials, NGOs and the police), working in coordination to change childhoods. Consequently, the collective efforts of these various actors to implement the two interrelated development interventions – schooling and anti-child labour programmes - has created a mode of regulation, a system of control on children's mobility, thereby shaping the life paths of rural Gamo children. Compared to Gamo childhoods of a few decades ago, contemporary Gamo childhoods are quite different, with children's mobility being increasingly monitored and discouraged on the basis of controlling school dropout rates. Schools have therefore served as key places to control children's time, bodies and mobility, with children, in turn, developing their own strategies to manage school work and weaving.

The second spatial context, the home, is an important place where both the localized bodily discourses and the global anti-child labour discourses interact to shape childhood experiences. For the purposes of public awareness and to show the working conditions of children, international organizations use specific images of working children in their homes sitting in front of a handloom (see chapter 4). The global work-free childhoods discourse views most child weaving activities in the home as a social problem. Such a view has contributed to the official labelling of weaving as a hazardous occupation for children by the government of Ethiopia. In contrast, this thesis has shown that homes are key places where child weaving practices in urban Gamo society take place within the context of sociocultural relations and as part and parcel of children's everyday lives, and are a vocational exercise in their immediate environment. Children's vocational exercise involves both individualized and collective skills development, contributing to broader

social reproduction processes in the urban weaving economy. In these processes, children are constructed as active participants who contribute to the co-production of value (Rogoff 2003, Corsaro 1997). As such, children's involvement in weaving is not per se viewed as learning, but as a learning-by-doing practice in which children mobilize networks of relatedness, based on (fictive) kinship relations, to become weavers. Most importantly, a specific period in childhood (ages 11 to 16) was found to be the most appropriate time to cultivate greater weaving skills. This is mainly due to the culturally accepted belief that children in this particular life-phase embody specific qualities enabling them to easily internalize the key traits of a weaver. This localized standard is in contrast to the international, normative age-based criteria for participation in productive activities that many countries codified following ILO's Minimum Age Convention. In this regard, the international minimum age for work standard overlooks children's ability to easily cultivate weaving skills, as compared to adults, due to their embodiment of specific childhood qualities.

The third spatial context, factory, is mainly a place of enterprise development produced by neoliberal policies. Chapter 4 demonstrated how factories serve to create a boundary between children's and adults' spaces of work. In this regard, factories are key places where two broader processes converge to shape Gamo childhoods and disrupt social reproduction. These processes are first, the stricter implementation of the minimum age for work and, second, the neoliberal agenda of promoting the private sector through enterprise development. While chronological age-based criteria for working in factories has systematically barred children from involvement in productive activities, the promotion of the private sector has contributed to the dislocation of several thousands of workplaces of weavers (from homes to the newly built factories). The relocation of weavers from homes to the factories has constrained many descendants of these weavers, including children and young people, from engaging in the learning-by-doing practice of weaving in their respective homes. The mainly age-based organization of

labour in the factories is quite different from the way the weaving economy operates in the home, where children form an important part of the workforce for the production of exchange value and for the reproduction of the labour force. Thus, preventing children from taking part in weaving activities in factories, combined with the relocation of adult weavers to those workplaces, has, by implication, disrupted the social reproductive patterns of several urban Gamo households.

However, it should be noted that not all working children stopped weaving due to these new developments subsequent to the introduction of factories. As weaving is an important source of their livelihoods and a safety net in case of difficulty in finding a job in the future, several children (both male and female) with reasonable weaving skills have continued to work from their homes with factory-based weavers through sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements. Although this is understood as a form of children's agency, it has contributed to the deepening of informality in the weaving economy. By focusing on child weaving practices, the work-free childhoods discourse fails to attend to these dynamics and their implications on working children and household economies. Based on this, this thesis argued that the work-free childhoods discourse (with chronological age-based standards) overlooks the nature of children's work and the different specialist groups in the weaving economy, as well as the division of labour and skill requirements for production and marketing.

The fourth and last spatial context that this research used for analytical purposes to explain the local-global interactions is village. Here, a village includes many sites (i.e., open fields, street corners, local tea rooms, youth centres and local retail shops) that are important for an understanding of the social relations among peers and between children and adults. Using village settings, this thesis demonstrated that Gamo childhoods have a relationship with money: monetized childhoods. The analysis of monetized childhoods was grounded in the local cultural practice of giving regular (weekly) *senbeta misa* to the Gamo working children in the urban weaving economy. It is also based on the global

processes of young peoples' increased consumption cultures (White 1996, Chaplin & John 2007, Cook 2008). As argued in this thesis, young people's spending of their *senbeta misa* is not only a localized experience of Gamo children. Rather, through specific consumption practices in village settings (watching European soccer matches, Hollywood and Bollywood movies, buying mobile phones and images of internationally renowned soccer and movie celebrities), working Gamo children become integrated in the broader processes of globalization and the international market. Importantly, the consumption practices of working Gamo children have revealed their agency in participating in children's economies (Ruckenstien 2010); in deciding how to spend their money. This idea of monetized childhoods is in stark contrast to the international child labour discourse that mostly emphasizes vulnerability, crisis and poverty in Africa (Robson 2004a, 2011, ILO 2017). As such, through an analysis of monetized childhoods, this thesis has shown that it is not solely poverty that explains African childhoods; rather, having money (*senbeta misa*) in this increasingly globalized world affects belongingness among children's peers and their consumption cultures in village settings.

Furthermore, specific sociocultural attitudes and practices reinforce gendered consumption cultures among working children, with boys more leisure-oriented and girls more family-oriented (see chapter 8). In this regard, consumption practices typify becoming a 'proper boy' and a 'proper girl' in the villages, reinforcing particular forms of masculinities and femininities. As children's places, villages have therefore served not only as a site of production, but also of consumption. Thus it is not only productive activities that shape gendered practices and the division of labour; consumption cultures in the villages are equally important in reinforcing gendered identities.

In sum, this thesis demonstrated how the material places where children spend their everyday lives are important sites for understanding the interactions of local and global processes that shape childhood experiences. By holding an open worldview and following a pragmatic

approach, *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing* hopes to be insightful and thereby provide a nuanced analysis of children's work and the changes in childhoods. Using *the everyday politics of learning-by-doing* as a launching pad, this thesis speaks to and challenges the mainstream work-free childhoods discourse. By doing so, this thesis hopes to have achieved its purpose - contribute to broader research and policy.

## 9.4 Broader research and policy implications of the study

As shown in this thesis, the changes in childhoods and children's work are products of many broader interacting political-economic and local sociocultural processes, in particular spatial contexts. In this regard, the thesis demonstrates how global processes of promoting and executing the ideals of work-free childhoods are at odds with the local sociocultural understandings of childhoods and work as well as the societal practices in particular geographies. Based on this, the study stresses the importance of considering the nature and meaning of children's work in the handloom weaving sector, the bodily qualities of childhood to cultivate skills, the localized standards to participate in work, the division of labour based on gender, the generational dimensions of work, the market and skills dynamics, and the broader processes at play. To this end, this research offers some insights to policy makers and researchers.

For researchers, the study hopes to be insightful in many ways. It reveals the analytical importance of using a framework that gives a holistic picture of childhoods and children's work. As explained by Abebe & Bessell (2011: 781), a holistic picture of children's work recognizes how work is interrelated with the processes of development, and how cultural and socioeconomic changes, together with the geographic and gendered dimensions of work, become exploitative and rewarding. However, this study underscores that future research on children's work could be even more insightful by engaging with policies of youth (un)employment, labour reproduction and apprenticeship practices from a life-course perspective. This study shows that children's

work is one of the learning-by-doing practices, and is shaped by the interaction between global and local discourses and processes of change. In this regard, future research that recognizes children's voice and at the same time gives space to the intergenerational and gendered dynamics of work, and that considers the nature of work, conceptions of childhoods, and discourses on children's bodies will undoubtedly give a much more insightful picture of children's work and childhoods.

For policy makers, this study shows the importance of considering both the local and the global processes that shape childhoods and, importantly, of taking children's perspectives more seriously. As I stated at the outset of this dissertation, development practices in Ethiopia and elsewhere mostly ignore working children's voices and fail to attend to the nature of children's work and life-phase transitions (Jones et al 2005, Robson 2004b). This often leads to a narrow and essentialist view of particular childhoods. Previous research documented that policy and programme interventions that are based on narrowly defined and essentialist views of childhood led to a wastage of resources and even endangered children's well-being (see for e.g., Bissell et al 2006, Bourdillon et al 2010). As demonstrated in this thesis, the weaving economy is not only about weaving. Yet by only attending to child weaving practices, policy makers fail to take into account the nature of skills development, the way the weaving economy has reproduced itself, and the gendered and intergenerational dimensions of work.

By employing a forward-looking perspective, this study claims that the denunciation of child weaving will have serious implications on labour reproduction in the urban weaving economy over the next few decades. This is even more evident because, to date, the labour force in the Ethiopian handloom weaving economy has not been replaced by machinery, due to the nature of the work and the types of inputs used in production processes. Thus, an abolitionist approach towards child labour will not only affect working children's everyday lives and their livelihoods; it will also jeopardize the survival of handloom weaving enterprises. Therefore, for policy makers, this thesis points to the need

to revisit child labour policies, to re-orient programmes, and thereby to replace the blanket abolitionist approach, possibly, by a regulatory one.

Regulating children's work may take different forms. However, to develop an effective regulatory mechanism, this thesis urges policy makers to have a closer look to the localized learning-by-doing system, and understand its benefits and side-effects. A closer look at the nature of children's work and childhood learning-by-doing practices will be helpful for policy makers and practitioners to work towards building on the benefits and reducing the side effects. The thesis points to policy makers to understand the relations between different learning systems including the learning-by-doing and conventional schooling. Ideally, learning that takes place in the school settings and outside of schools (e.g., households) need to mutually support to each other. Yet by adding extra school work and exposing children to time poverty, anti-child labour programs made schooling and weaving less compatible (chapter 7). Hence, policy makers need to re-examine the assumptions behind increased schooling and the outcomes of this on childhoods. An assertion that schooling is the only best way to fulfil young people's aspirations is found to be less convincing; especially in this period of economic uncertainties. In this regard, the thesis argues that it would be more beneficial for working children to have access to both conventional schooling and also to alternative skills development modalities(such as weaving practices). The thesis hopes to have accomplished its objective of offering some insights on the changes in childhoods and the implications of local and global interactions in shaping children's work.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Semi structured interview guide for child workers

1. What activities do you perform other than schooling (all the work)?
2. Why do you work in the weaving sector? (Probe: material needs, learning, helping parents, other reasons…?)
3. From the production processes in weaving, which work is done by you? (Probe: Spinning (Madawer), Tibeb melkem, dir madrat, Netela mesefat, etc…) Where? Why?
4. How did you learn weaving and other works in the weaving sector? Who taught you?
5. At what age did you start to learn weaving and working independently?
6. How do you see your work that is related to weaving? (probe: beneficial/harmful, enabling/disabling, a means to learn/to be an expert, a means of dispossession) Why?
7. How do you see the changes in workplaces? Are they beneficial for you or not? Why?
8. What types of products can you make? (Probe: Netela, Gabi, Scurfs, tibeb, etc…) Why these particular types?
9. What is the current price of the fabrics you produce? What about the input costs?
10. What particular types of tibeb can you make if any? (Probe: Shererit, Zinar...) Why?
11. How were you recruited? If working as an unpaid family worker, why did you get chosen among other children in the household?
12. What is your status as a worker? (Probe: apprentice, unpaid family worker, paid employee….) Why do you have this particular status?
13. If you are living with your employer, how much wage/salary do you get?
14. If you receive pocket money (Yesenbet misa), how much do you get? When do you get it? Why do you get this amount?
15. What about your parents (Probe: what is their background (livelihoods, educational status)? Where do they live?

16. How do you combine work, schooling, and play? In general, how do you spend your day?
17. How do you feel about your work? Why?
18. In the weaving sector, what is a workplace and what is a home for you? Why? (Probe: workplaces as homes, as training centres, places of parental control, disciplining, and identity formation, etc…?)
19. Why do you view the workplaces in particular ways? (This can be understood more from observations)

Demographic information of the participant

1. Full Name_____ Ethnicity_____ Place of birth_____
2. Age (__) (Date of Birth_____)
3. Living address: (Sub city_____) (Woreda _____)
4. Living with (parents___) (Relatives (Specify: _____) (Employer____)
5. Household size (___) (No of siblings___)
6. Education: (Name of School_____) (Grade___) academic rank (repetition ___)

## Appendix 2

### Historical analysis of the weaving sector

### (Interview guide for elderly Gamo people (age above 60) and government officials

1. When and where did weaving start in Addis Ababa?
2. How and why did weaving start in Addis Ababa?
3. From which community/ethnic group were the first weavers? Why?
4. Why are most of the current weavers in the research site Gamos?
5. Why do weavers work around Shiro Meda and around? In your view, what are the main historical trajectories of the weaving sector? Why?
6. What are the main changes in the weaving sector (in terms of marketability, people's views about it, government support, number of weavers) in different periods (Hailesellasie, Derg, EPRDF) and why?
7. How do you see the changes in workplaces? Historically, what is the source of labour for the weaving sector?
8. Since when did children start to work? Why do they work? What is the normal age for a child to start weaving? Why?
9. Why are the majority of weavers in the Gamo community male? Why not female?
10. When did you start weaving? Why? Who taught you the skills?

**Demographic information**

1. Name_____ Gender _____
2. Age_____ Date of birth_____
3. Ethnicity_____
4. Current living address (Sub city____, Woreda _____)
5. Living with (parents___) (Relatives (Specify: _____) (Employer____)
6. Educational status _____
7. Marital status _____ years of Marriage _____
8. No of children_____ Male___ Female ____
9. Those children who weave_____
10. Current source of livelihood _____ (If it is not weaving, why?)

## Appendix 3

### Semi structured interview guide (adult weavers)

1. How did you learn weaving?
- When (Age)?
- With whom?
- Where (in households or other workplaces)?
- Why in households/others?
- How much time did it take for you?
- When did you start working independently (for yourself)?
2. For how long have you worked as a weaver? Any other occupation?
3. What was the occupation of your parents?
- What about their educational background?
- Where did they live?
4. What do you know about the policies in place to change the weaving sector?
- How are the policies implemented?
5. How is your weaving cooperative (home-based workplace) linked to enterprises like wholesaling companies, credit institutions, development organizations, NGOs etc…?
- What about the linkage with household enterprises?
- Who buys your fabrics? Why?
6. What are your views about child weaving?
- What about children's work in different workplaces?
- How do child weavers work with the changing spatiality/workplaces?
- What are the means of livelihoods for working children and their family (weaving, others)?
- How do the recent policies of clustering affect children's livelihoods?
7. What are the production processes of weaving? At what age did you learn each?
8. From your work experience, what are the differences across workplaces (home-based and factory based) in terms of labour requirement?

9. What are the sources of labour in your workplace for different tasks?
- How is the labour demand fulfilled in the workplaces (probe: for Spinning, *Dir madrat, Netela mesfat, mequachet,* etc...)?
- What would you do in case you had to finish a particular fabric and you had no time? (Probe: sub contract it to home based workers, friends, child workers, etc…) Who are these people?
10. What sort of relationships do different enterprises/cooperatives have with the government and NGOs (like tax and rent payments, trainings, capacity development, supply of credit services, etc…)?
11. How much is the tax/rent (for homes) rates? Who collects that?
12. Why are the majority of the weavers in the Gamo community male?
13. What is the gender role of girls and women in the Gamo society (in particular in households within the research site whose livelihoods are dependent on weaving)?
14. How much do you save (at the individual level)?
- How much capital does your cooperative have?
- How do you view such savings of the cooperative members?
- What plan does your cooperative have for the future?

**Demographic information**

1. Full Name _____ Cooperative's name _____No of cooperative members____
2. Gender__ Age (Year and date of birth)____ Place of birth___ current address ____
3. Ethnicity ___ Education___ Marital status____ spouses occupation ____
4. Household size___ No of children (Male __ Female___) children who weave____ spin____ Sewing *Netela*_____ Others (specify_____) Household income/month____
5. If they work other types of work (specify) _____living in own house__ rented home___
6. Migration history (If available) year ____ Destination___ Reason for migrating _____

## Appendix 4

### Atlas ti- coding and data analysis

| Super codes | Code Families | Preliminary Codes |
|---|---|---|
| ***Becoming a weaver*** ***(5-code families, 80 codes, and 756 quotations)*** | *Between being and becoming* | *Codes (15): [BE: age and weaving] [BE: Becoming a Gamo weaver] [Being: politics of being independent weaver] [Child pro: harmful weaving] [Half blind] [my leg is long enough] [Re: responsibility and agency] [Demo: Age] [Demo: Birth date: knowing] [Demo: Birth place: Addis Ababa] [Demo: birthplace: rural south] [Demo: Gender: Female] [Demo: Gender: Male] [Demo: birth date (Not knowing)] [in out culture people have big..]*<br>*Quotation(s): 128* |
| | *Reasons to be a weaver* | *Codes (22): [Det 1: Age and weaving] [Det: abusive father] [Det: Advancing as the best option] [Det: family adversities] [Det: gaining income and more profits] [Det: Gendered division of labour] [Det: Parental education] [Det: parents in the rural] [Det: seasonality and time-use] [Det: Spare time and weaving] [other works] [Parental interest] ["hand to mouth"] [R 3:* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | *Weaving and livelihoods transition] [R 4: interest towards weaving] [R 6: Weaving as the only and best alternative] [R 7: peers work and childhood] [R: Being first child] [R: Spare time: learning weaving] [R1: helping family] [Weaving for food] [What would we eat if we abandon...]*<br>*Quotation(s): 181* |
| | *Gender and weaving* | *Codes (8): [gender identity and weaving] [Gender: Weaving and reproductive tasks] [girl: no reproductive task] [Girls and the future] [girls, spending and saving] [menstruation] [Weaving and multiple tasks] [female weaving and subtle attitudes]*<br>*Quotation(s): 63* |
| | *Labour reproduction* | *Codes (30): ['matso mitsa'] ['molede'] [Agency: Children asking to learn weaving] [Early ages and observations] [Experience to be good] [I don't want my son be like the..] [LP 1: learning period of weaving] [LR 3: third generation skill] [LR: Being girl and more family oriented] [LR: being young and first skills] [LR: Family initiated start] [LR: forbidden but keen to learn] [LR: Fourth generation skills] [LR: Gendered means of income] [LR: girls and future oriented] [LR:* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | *hiding to learn weaving] [LR: independent weaving] [LR: intergenerational learning] [LR: Learning from others] [LR: learning process] [LR: Means of learning] [LR: Paying back for the learning] [LR: Peripheral skills] [LR: second generation] [LR: Self-initiated learning] [LR: Skill levels and pricing] [LR: too young as conducive to learn] [LR: Upgrading skills/ advancing to the next level] [L14R: upper generation skill] [view of self-]*<br>*Quotation(s): 333* |
| | *Workplace, living space, vocational space* | *Codes (5): [Home and weaving works] [Home: A place of controlling] [living with housemates] [views on workplace] [Working and paying for a Hole]*<br>*Quotation(s): 51* |
| ***Being a weaver***<br>***(7 code-families, 36 codes and 313 quotations)*** | *Despised weaving* | *Codes (3): ['Aboche'] ['Chura'] ["weaver and hyena never get out of a hole.]*<br>*Quotation(s): 3* |
| | *Fabrics and production: quantity and quality* | *Codes (3): [Type: fabric] [Type: Tibebs] [Weekly production]*<br>*Quotation(s): 78* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Families* | *Codes (4): [Family: Extended ones and togetherness] [Family: having possession in the rural] [family: here and there] [Weaving as family business]*<br>*Quotation(s): 57* |
| *Feeling of a child weaver* | *Codes (4): [Feeling: Weaving as bad] [Feeling: weaving as good] [Health impacts] [Overworking weaving]*<br>*Quotation(s): 56* |
| *Market* | *Codes (11): [Market-oriented approach] [Market: delala (Adrash)] [Market: Exporters] [Market: family order] [Market: Selling anywhere better] [Market: shop owner/regular customer] [Market: Sunday market] [Order: new workplace making money] [PR: Outsourcing] [subcontracting from new workplace]*<br>*[Source of surplus value]*<br>*Quotation(s): 65* |
| *Social life and support among the Gamos* | *Codes (5): [iddir'] [Migrant: for work purpose] [Mixed settlers (rural-urban)] [rural people thinking of the urban as rich] [Weaving with others and feeling good]*<br>*Quotation(s): 10* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Weavers, identity and urban life* | *Codes (7): [Urban boys: less interest in weaving] [views of a migrant child] [views on urban life] [Weavers going out to the outskirts] [Weaving and Gamo identity] [Weaving as despised] [weaving has no pension]*<br>*Quotation(s): 44* |
| ***Weaving, schooling and the future***<br>***(3 code-families, 24 codes and 142 quotations)*** | *Schooling* | *Codes (14): [school-weaving relationships] [attending school to end weaving...] [Being student and plain fabric] [Being student and types of fabric] [Not failing in school] [School: dropping out] [School: failing] [School: hating school work] [School: Homework in the school] [School: Incomplete] [School: Never failed] [Waithood and schooling] [Weaving-tibeb making-schooling relationships] [Weaving and schooling relationships*<br>*Quotation(s): 71* |
| | *Everyday lives* | *Codes (5): [Daily: Daily time-use] [Daily: Daily working hours] [Gamo children's day] [Spare time and no* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | *weaving] [Spare time: girls]*<br>*Quotation(s): 58* |
| | *Transitioning forms* | *Codes (5): [Growing up and future aspirations] [Parent's additional occupations] [Transitioning: family problems] [transitioning: through aging] [weaving has no pension]*<br>*Quotation(s): 13* |
| ***Monetized childhoods***<br>***(2 code- families, 14 codes and 127 quotations)*** | *Money and children* | *Codes (9): ['eij kiray] [Amhara friends: no money] [Income perspective] [Income: Self-reliant] [Iquib.] [price knowledge] [Senbet Misa: amount] [Spending and saving] [Weekly income]*<br>*Quotation(s): 83* |
| | *Gendered consumption* | *Codes (5): [Boys: money and spare time [Boys: daily life and money usage] [Being boy, money and the future] [girls and senbet misa] [girls, spending and saving]*<br>*Quotation(s): 44* |

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